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Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings.

PART I.

FIRST EDITION.

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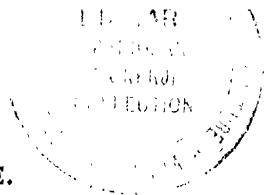
PREFACE.

THE Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna had been appearing in the columns of the *Prabuddha Bharata* from the year 1900 to 1913, and the reprinting of the whole matter in book-form was not at all a continuous process so far as this first Part is concerned. Defects therefore have unavoidably crept into both the printing and the editing of this Part, for defects are sure to appear when things have to be done *per saltum*. The second part which embodies the rest of the whole published collection and is now ready for the press will not, we hope, suffer from such defects.

But the collection covered by these two parts cannot be said to be exhaustive. Only it seeks to present in one compass all the sayings that have yet appeared in Bengali or English publications. But all that these latter contain do not exhaust all that fell from the sacred lips of the great Master in the way of precepts or advice. Each memory of his life's events and ancedotes is heavy laden with the fragrance of the highest teachings for mankind; and as the venerable writer* of the most detailed and authentic story of his life remarks, the Teacher in him stood out in sublime relief almost in every period of his life. Who can, moreover,

* His Holiness the Swami Saradananda in his. "Sri-Sri-Ramakrishna-lila-prasanga" (Bengali).

record in the form of sayings *seriatim* the whole message of a life in which every moment lived was in itself an edification to mankind? Such Divine Teachers effect spiritual uplift more by their active life and inspiration and their profound dealings with men than by mere word of mouth. Even the words of advice uttered by them have to be taken along with attendant circumstances to enable us to understand their true significance and application.

We have in contemplation, therefore, the publication of a third part of "Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings" wherein an attempt will be made to present to English readers the essentials of the Master's message in a more definite and systematic form over and above supplying omissions occuring in the collection already published. We hope these three volumes of Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings would form a fitting literary complement and adjunct to the authorised biography of the great Master which His Holiness the Swami Saradananda, Secretary, Ramkrishna Mission, has undertaken to write for English readers.

We also take this opportunity to gratefully acknowledge the valuable collaboration in the editing work given by the late Sister Nivedita whose loss to India and her cause we have to mourn from so many platforms of national activity.

THE PUBLISHERS.

Errata.

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CONTENTS.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

The Nature of the Worldly-minded

1. The worldly-minded never come to their senses, even though they suffer and have terrible experiences. Camels are very fond of thorny shrubs. The more they eat of them, the more do their mouths bleed, yet they do not refrain from making them their food.*

2. Sometimes the condition of the worldly is like that of a snake which has caught a mole: it can neither swallow it, nor throw it out. So they may know that there is nothing real in this world—it is like the *Amrha* fruit, only skin and stone and no kernel to speak of—yet they cannot leave it, and fix their minds on God.

3. If the worldly, again, are removed from worldly associations, and brought under spiritual influences amongst the good and holy, they can never rest, but pine away in anxiety. The worms which breed and prosper in refuse will die if put into a clean and freshly-cooked potful of rice.*

4. The world-bound soul, like the filth-worm, lives and dies in the mire of worldliness without any idea of

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* Gospel (Bengali) by M.

its impurity. So the fly sits by turns on the dungheap and on sugar, but the bee drinks always of honey and nothing else.

5. When a certain quantity of pure milk is mixed with double the quantity of water, it takes a long time and much labour to thicken it to the consistency of *kshira* (condensed milk). So the mind of the worldly man is largely diluted with the water of impure thoughts and it requires time and labour to purify and give the proper consistency to it.*

6. Can you drive nails into a stone? If you try, you may break the heads of the nails but you will hardly make any impression on the stone.†

7. As a nail cannot be driven into a stone, yet enters easily into the earth, so the advice of the pious does not affect the soul of a worldly man, while it pierces deep into the heart of a believer.†

8. The crocodile is struck in vain with sword or spear.†

9. The worldly man is like the alligator. As the body of the alligator is not susceptible of the strokes of any weapon, and as it cannot be put to death except by striking at the belly, so no matter how much good advice you give the worldly man, and no matter how much self-disgust you arouse in him, he will never realise his situation fully, unless you can wean him from the objects of his attachment and desire.

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* Gospel (Bengali) by M. † Gospel by M.

10. The begging-bowl gourd (*Kamandalu*) may have been to the four *dhâmas* (the four chief places of pilgrimage in India) and yet remain as bitter in taste as ever.*

11. As the fly sits now on a festering wound, and again on an offering dedicated to the gods, so the mind of the worldly is at one time deeply engaged in religious topics and at the next moment lost in the enjoyment of wealth and lust.†

12. Worldly persons may perform many pious and charitable acts in the hope of earthly reward, but when misfortune and sorrow approach, this piety and charity forsake them. They are like the parrot that repeats 'Radha-Krishna,' 'Radha-Krishna,' the livelong day, but cries 'kaw, kaw' when caught by a cat, forgetting the divine name.

13. Therefore do I say, lecturing on religious subjects to such men will prove useless. They are sure to remain as worldly as ever, in spite of all your lectures.*

14. A spring cushion is pressed down when one sits upon it, but soon resumes its shape when the pressure is removed. So is it with worldly men. They are full of religious sentiment so long as they hear religious talk; but no sooner do they enter into the daily routine of the world, than they forget all those high and noble thoughts and become as impure as ever.†

15. As long as the iron is in the furnace it remains red-hot, but becomes black when taken out of the fire.

* Gospel by M. † Gospel (Bengali) by M.

So with worldly men. As long as they are in places of worship or in the company of pious people, they are full of religious emotion, but no sooner do they lose these associations than the flood of devotion leaves them.*

16. Seeing the gleaming water pass through the valve of the bamboo fish-trap in the rice-fields, the small fry enter with great glee. But having once entered they cannot get out again. Similarly, foolish men enter the meshes of the world, lured by its false glitter, but it is so much easier to enter than to renounce, that they are caught like the little fish, and imprisoned for good.*

17. A gentleman of modern education was once discussing with the Blessed One the nature of householders uncontaminated by worldliness. To him, the Bhagavan said: "I know of what sort is your 'uncontaminated family-man' of the present day! If a poor Brâhman come to beg of this master of the house, he (being an uncontaminated family-man and having no concern in money matters, for it is his wife who manages all those things), says to the begging Brâhman, 'Sir, I never touch money, why do you waste your time in begging of me?' The Brâhman, however, proves inexorable. Fired with his importunate entreaties your uncontaminated family-man thinks within himself that he must be paid a rupee, and tells him openly: 'Well sir, come to-morrow, I shall see what I can do for you.' Then going in, this typical householder tells his wife, 'Look here, my dear, a poor Brâhman is in great distress, let us give him a rupee.' Hearing the word 'rupee' his wife gets out of

* Gospel (Bengali) by M.

temper and says tauntingly, 'Aha, what a generous fellow you are! Are rupees like leaves and stones to be thrown away without the least thought?' 'Well, my dear,' replies the master in an apologetic tone, 'the Brâhman is very poor and we should not give him less.' 'No,' says his wife, 'I cannot spare so much. Here is a two-anna bit, you can give that to him, if you like.' As the Babu is a family-man, quite uncontaminated by worldliness, he takes, of course, what his wife gives him, and next day the beggar gets only a two-anna piece. So you see, your so-called uncontaminated family-men are really not masters of themselves. Because they do not look after their family-affairs they think that they are very good and holy men, while as a matter of fact they are hen-pecked husbands guided entirely by their wives, and so are but very poor specimens even of common humanity."

18. When we talk with a worldly man we can see that his heart is full of worldly thoughts and desires, even as the crop of a pigeon is seen to be full of grain.

19. A group of fish-women on their way home from a distant market, being overtaken by a heavy hailstorm, were compelled to take shelter in a florist's house on the road. Their host kindly allowed them to spend the night in a room where sweet-smelling flowers had been kept. But the atmosphere was too good for the women, and they could not get even a wink of sleep. Till one of them at last suggested a remedy, 'Let us sprinkle a little water on our empty fish-baskets and put them close to us, so as to keep this troublesome smell of flowers from

spoiling our sleep!' Every one gladly agreed to the proposal, with the effect that all soon began to snore!

Such, indeed, is the power and influence of habit! The worldly soul, brought up and accustomed to materialistic thoughts and surroundings cannot breathe long in an atmosphere of purity and renunciation without feeling restlessness and discomfort.

20. The story goes that when the Malaya breeze blows, those trees that have stout hearts are converted into sandal wood; but those which have no stamina, like the bamboo and plantain, remain unchanged. Thus when Divine grace descends, men having the germs of piety and goodness in them are changed at once into holy beings and become infilled with Divinity, but worthless and worldly men remain as before.*

21. A worldly man is best known by his antipathy to whatever savours of religion. He not only dislikes hearing any hymn or sacred music, or uttering the holy name of God, but dissuades others from doing the same. He scoffs at prayer and mocks at religious societies and pious men.

22. When I see that there have come to me those who care nothing for the spiritual life, I suggest that they should go out and sit and look at the river, or visit our grand temples in the garden. This is that they may be free to think and do whatever they like, which they could not if compelled to remain in our company.

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* Gospel (Bengali) by M.

Sometimes the worldly-minded and the pious come together. It is very easy then to distinguish those who do not like religious conversation! They become so very impatient and restless, while others are having long talks about God and spirituality, that they find it too much even to sit still, and whisper in their friends' ears, "When are you going? How long shall you stay?" Occasionally the friend will say "Wait a little, we are coming presently!" At which, disgusted, they reply "Very well then! You can go on talking. We shall go out and wait for you in the boat!" *

23. A man immersed in worldliness cannot attain to divine knowledge. He cannot see God.

Does muddy water reflect the sun! †

24. As water flowing under a bridge, in at one side and out at the other, so with spiritual teaching given to worldly souls. It enters at one ear and leaves by the other, without making any impression upon their minds.

25. The heart of the devotee free from desires is like a dry match which ignites directly it is struck, the slightest mention of the name of the Deity kindling the fire of love in his heart. But the mind of the worldly, soaked in lust and greed, is like a damp match which will not light, however often you may strike it. Similarly the worldly-minded man can never be fired to enthusiasm, though God be preached to him innumerable times.*

* Gospel (Bengali) by M. † Gospel by M.

26. A worldly man may be endowed with intellect as great as that of Janaka, may take as much pain and trouble as a yogin, and make as great sacrifices as an ascetic; but all these he makes and does, not for the sake of God, but for worldliness, honour and wealth.

27. As a little boy or a girl can have no idea of married happiness, even so a worldly man cannot at all comprehend the ecstasy of Divine communion.

SRÎ RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

Advice to the Worldly-minded

28. As a man standing on the brink of a deep well is always watchful and afraid lest he should fall into it, so ought a man living in the world to be always on his guard against temptation. He who has once fallen into that well can hardly come out of it pure and stainless.

29. The alligator loves to swim on the surface of the water, but is obliged to remain beneath for fear of the hunter. Yet whenever he finds an opportunity he rises with a deep whizzing noise, and swims happily on the watery expanse. O man, entangled in the meshes of the world, thou too art anxious to swim on the surface of the Ocean of Bliss, but art prevented by the importunate demands of thy family! Yet be of good cheer! Whenever thou findest any leisure, call eagerly upon thy God, pray to Him earnestly, and tell Him all thy sorrows. In due time, He will surely emancipate thee, and enable thee to swim happily upon the Ocean of Bliss.

30. As the street minstrel with one hand plays the guitar and with the other strikes a drum, while at the

same time he sings a song, so, do thou, O world-bound soul, perform all thy worldly duties with thy hands, never forgetting to repeat and glorify the name of the Lord with all thy heart.

31. It is said that when a Tantrika tries to invoke the Deity through the medium of the spirit of the dead, he sits on a fresh human corpse and keeps near him food and wine. During the course of the invocation, if at any time the corpse is vivified (temporarily), the intrepid invoker must pour the wine and thrust the food into its gaping mouth, to appease the elemental that has, for the time being, taken possession of it. If this be not done, the elemental will not only interrupt the invocation but cause danger to his life. So dwelling on the bosom of the carcass of the world, if thou desirest to attain beatitude, then first provide thyself with all things necessary to pacify the clamour of worldly demands on thee; otherwise thy devotions will be broken and interrupted, by the cares and anxieties of life.*

32. As an unchaste woman, busily engaged in household affairs, is all the while thinking of her secret lover, so do thou, O man of the world, perform thy round of worldly duties, but let thy heart be fixed always on God.*

33. As a wet nurse in a rich family brings up the child of her master, loving the baby as if it were her own, yet knowing well that she has no claim upon it; so think

* Gospel (Bengali) by M.

you also, that you are but trustees and guardians of your children, whose real father is the Lord Himself.†

34. As a boy holding to a post or pillar whirls about it with headlong speed without fear of falling; so perform thy worldly duties, fixing thy hold firmly upon God, and thou shalt be free from danger.

35. The caterpillar gets itself imprisoned in its self-woven cocoon. So the worldly soul becomes entangled in the meshes of its own desires. But when the caterpillar develops into a butterfly, it bursts the cocoon, to enjoy the light and air in freedom. So the worldly soul can burst through the meshes of *Maya* by the wings of *Viveka* (discrimination) and *Vairagyam* (renunciation).

36. Little children play happily with their dolls as long as they are alone, but as soon as their mother comes in, they throw them away and run to her crying, "Mother! dear mother!" You also are now at play in this world, intent on the dolls of wealth, of honour, of fame, without fear or anxiety. But if once you see the Divine Mother, you will have no more pleasure in wealth, fame, and honour. Leaving all these you will run to Her.†

37. Worldly men will not act up to your advice if you ask them to renounce everything and render themselves up at the lotus feet of God. Hence after much deliberation as to how to attract such souls, Gour and Nitai hit upon the plan of holding out to them a bait, and taught, "The soup of the Magur fish, the company of the youth-

† Gospel (Bengali) by M.

ful maiden, have ye, brothers, with the name of *Hari*." Many flocked to them to utter the name of God in expectation of getting the first two. But they were generally caught in the trap. When by and by they came to have a little taste of the nectar of God's name they understood the hidden meaning of Nitai's teachings.

The soup of the Magur fish is nothing but the tears of ecstasy which flow out of the fulness of the heart in love for God; the youthful maiden is the ever-youthful earth; so the company of the youthful maiden implies the blessed stage of the God-intoxicated man, when he falls down on the earth, unable to keep his balance, owing to excess of God-intoxication.†

38. That man, who, living in the midst of the temptations of the world, attains perfection, is a hero indeed.†

39. Before soldiers go out to meet the enemy they learn the art of fighting in their barracks, where they do not have to put up with the hardships incidental to action in the open. So, avail yourself of your home-life to raise your spiritual condition before you take to the austerities of asceticism.

40. As persons living in a house infested with venomous snakes are always alert and cautious, so should men living in the world be always on their guard against the allurements of lust and greed.

41. Live in the world but be not worldly, as says the verse:—"Make the frog dance in the company of the

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† Gospel (Bengali) by M.

snake, but do not allow the snake to swallow it. Catch fish, but do not touch the water."

42. A snake dwelt in a certain place. No one dared to pass that way. For whoever did so was instantaneously bitten to death. Once a Mahatman passed by that road, and the serpent pursued him to strike him. But when he approached the holy man he lost all his ferocity, and was overpowered by the gentleness of the Yogin. Addressing the snake the sage said, 'Well, friend, thinkest thou to strike me?' The snake was abashed and made no reply. At this the sage said, 'Hearken, friend, do not injure anyone in future.' The snake bowed and nodded his assent. The sage went his own way and the snake entered his hole, and thenceforth began to live a life of innocence and purity without even attempting to harm anyone. In a few days all the neighbourhood began to think that the snake had lost all his venom, and was no more dangerous, and so everyone began to tease him. Some pelted him, others dragged him mercilessly by the tail, and in this way there was no end to his troubles. Fortunately the sage again passed by that way, and seeing the bruised and battered condition of the good snake, was very much moved, and inquired the cause of his distress. At this the snake replied, 'Holy sir, this is because I do not injure anyone, after your advice. But alas! they are so merciless!' 'My dear friend, I simply advised thee to strike no one, but I did not forbid thee to defend thyself. Although thou shouldst not injure any creature, still canst thou not hiss?' Similarly if thou livest in the world, make thyself feared and respected. Do not injure anyone, but do not, at the same time, let others injure you.

43. If you put a purifying agent, say, a piece of alum, into a vessel of muddy water, the water is purified and the impurities settle down at the bottom. Viveka (discrimination of the Real *i. e.*, God, from the unreal *i. e.*, the phenomenal universe) and Vairagya (non-attachment to the world) are the two purifying agents. It is through these that the worldly man ceases to be worldly and becomes pure.†

44. It does not matter much whether you are a family-man or not. Always perform your duties unattached, with your mind fixed on God. As, for instance, the man who has got a carbuncle on his back talks with his friends and others, and even carries out undertakings, but his mind is all the while on the pain he bears.‡

45. Once upon a time conceit entered into the heart of Narada and he thought there was no greater devotee than himself. Reading his heart, the Lord said, "Narada, go to such and such a place; there is a great Bhakta; cultivate his acquaintance; he is My true devotee." Narada went and found a peasant, who rose early in the morning, spoke the name of Hari (God) once, and taking his plough went out and tilled the ground the whole day. At night before going to bed he uttered the name of Hari once more. Narada said to himself: "How can this rustic be a lover of God? I see him busy in worldly duties and no sign of a pious man about him." So the sage went back to the Lord and told Him what he thought of his new acquaintance. But the Lord said, "Narada, take this cup of oil and go round the city and come back

† Gospel by M. ‡ Gospel (Bengali) by M.

with it, but take care that you do not spill a single drop of it." Narada did as he was told, and on his return, he was asked by the Lord how many times he had remembered Him in his circuit of the city. Narada replied, "Not once, O Lord; for how could I, when I had to keep the whole of my mind fixed on this cup, brimful of oil?" Then the Lord said, "This one cup of oil so diverted your attention that you forgot Me altogether. Look now at that peasant who, carrying the mighty load of all his worldly duties, remembers Me, nevertheless, twice every day."

46. Be free. Live in the world like the cast-out leaf from which food has been eaten It is worthless. Who cares to possess it? Who would consent even to touch it? It is blown, now here, now there, before the wind. Even so. To-day you are placed here. That is well. Remain. But when He takes you away and puts you in a better place, the world and the home will have lost nothing.‡

47. What are you to do when you are placed in this world? Give up everything to Him, resign yourself to Him, and there will be no more trouble for you. Then you will come to know that everything is done by His Will.

48. To live in the world or to leave it, depends upon the Will of God. Therefore work, leaving everything to Him. What else can you do?

49. He is a true hero who performs all the duties of the world with his mind fixed on God. None but a very strong man could while carrying a load of two maunds

‡ Gospel (Bengali) by M.

(about a hundred-weight) on his head, stop to admire a bridal procession marching past him.

50. As the water bird shakes off the water from its wings with a little flutter, as the mud-fish lives in the mud without becoming soiled, so should a man remain in the world entirely unaffected by it.†

51. If you desire to live in the world unattached, you should first practise devotion in solitude for some time,—say a year, or six months, or a month, or at least twelve days. During this period of retirement you should meditate constantly upon God, and pray to Him for Divine Love; you should revolve in your mind the thought that there is nothing in the world that you may call your own,—that those whom you think your own will pass away in no time. God is really your own. He is your All in All. How to obtain Him should be your only concern.†

52. Be ye turned into gold by *once* touching the philosopher's stone, then if you are laid deep under the earth for a thousand years you will remain gold forever and behave like gold when you are dug out.†

53. In the play of 'hide and seek' no one can make you a 'thief' if you once touch the 'Granny'; so living in the world cannot taint the man who has entered it after seeing God.†

54. One can enter into the world after the attainment of Bhakti. There is no fear of making the hands sticky

† Gospel (Bengali) by M.

with the milk of the jack fruit, if one breaks it after wetting them with oil.

55. The world is like water and the mind of man like milk. Milk will mix with water if you put the two together. But turn the milk into curds by letting it stand still in a pot, and churning it. Here is butter. Now, if you keep the butter in water, it won't mix with it but float *unattached*.

56. Some Brahmo boys once told me, that they followed Janaka's example; they lived in this world quite unattached to it. I said to them that it was easy *to say*, but a different matter *to be* Janaka. It was so hard to move among worldly affairs without being contaminated! What terrible austerities did not Janaka practise at the outset! But I do not advise you to go through similar hardships. What I want you to do is to practise devotion, and to live alone for some time in some quiet place. Enter into the world after gaining Jnana and Bhakti for yourselves. The best curd is formed when milk is left alone to stand quite still. Shaking or even changing the pot spoils it. Janaka was unattached, hence one of the epithets applied to him was Videha—that is, *literally*, body-less. He led the life of a Jivanmukta—one who is free, though alive in the body. This annihilation of the idea of the body is exceedingly difficult to accomplish. Truly Janaka was a great hero. He handled with ease the two swords—one of Jnana, and the other of Karma.‡

‡ Gospel (Bengali) by M.

57. A Sadhu or a god should never be visited empty-handed. However trifling the present,—it may be even a trifling fruit,—take something with you to place before the great ones of the world.

58. A shy horse does not go straight, so long as his eyes are not covered by blinkers. Similarly the mind of a worldly man should be prevented from looking about by the eye-pieces of Viveka and Vairagyam, for then it will not stumble or go astray in evil paths.†

59. Worldly men would be all right but for one sad mistake. If only they would undergo their sacrifices and hardships, and make use of all their learning, intellect and perseverance for the sake of God, instead of for riches and honour, what good might they not gain!

60. To someone He said: Well, now you have come to seek God, after spending the greater part of your life in the world. Had you entered the world after obtaining God, what peace and joy you would have found!

61. Q. Why do not worldly men give up everything to find God?

A. Can an actor coming on the stage throw off his mask at once? Let worldly men play out their part and in time they will throw off their false appearance.

62. Men often quote the example of King Janaka, as that of a man who lived in the world and yet attained

† Gospel by M.

perfection. But throughout the whole history of mankind there is only this solitary example. His case was not the rule, but the exception. The rule is that no one can attain spiritual perfection unless he renounces sex and possession. Do not think yourself to be a Janaka. Many centuries have rolled away, and the world has not produced another such.

63. The maid-servant says with reference to her master's house, 'This is our house.' All the while she knows that the house is not her own, for hers is far away in some distant village of Burdwan or Nuddea. Her own thoughts are all sent forth to her village home.

Again, referring to her master's child in her arms she will say, 'My *Hari* (that being the name of the child) has grown very naughty,' or, 'My *Hari* likes to eat this or that' and so on. But all the while she knows certainly that this *Hari* is not her own. I tell those that come to me, to lead a life unattached, like this maid-servant. I tell them to live unattached to this world—to be in the world, but not of it—and at the same time to keep their minds directed to God—the heavenly Home from whence all come. I tell them thus to pray for *Bhakti*, and found their lives on it.†

64. What is man to do if he does not stay in the world? Once a clerk was put into jail. At the expiration of his term of confinement he came out. Well, what should he do? Should he dance away his time in joy at his release, or take up his former occupation? Go on with your work, leaving the issue with the Lord.†

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† Gospel by M.

65. Q. What is the state of that man who is in the world and yet free from its attachments?

A. He is like a lotus-leaf in the water, or a mud-fish in the mud. The water wets not a lotus-leaf, and the mud stains not the glossy skin of the fish.

66. The world and God, how is it possible to harmonise these two. Look at the carpenter's wife, how many things she is doing at once! With one hand she stirs the flattened rice in the mortar of a *dhenki*,‡ with the other hand she is nursing her child and at the very same time she bargains with a purchaser about the rice. Thus though her occupations are many, her mind is fixed the while on the one idea that the pestle of the *dhenki* shall not fall on her hand and bruise it. So be in the world, but always remember Him, and never go astray from His path.*

67. Q. On having attained to what state of mind will the worldly find salvation?

A. If by grace of God the spirit of immediate renunciation come to one, then one may get rid of the attachment to lust and wealth and so alone become free from all worldly bondage.

68. Know certainly that the world is God's and not mine; I am His servant only, come to carry out His Will.†

69. Q. Is this world unreal?

A. It is unreal so long as you know not God. For you do not yet see Him in everything but fasten yourself

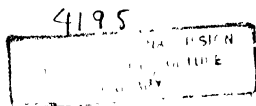
‡ A wooden husking and rice-flattening machine.

* Gospel (Bengali) by M. † Gospel by M.

to the world with the tie of "me and mine." Being thus deluded by ignorance you become attached to sense objects and go deeper and deeper into the abyss of *maya*. *Maya* makes men so utterly blind that they cannot get out of its meshes even when the way lies open. You yourself can see how unreal this sense-life is. Think a little of the very house that we are in. How many men have been born and have died in it! So things of the world appear before us at one moment, and vanish away at the next. Those whom you know to be your 'own,' will cease to exist for you, the moment you close your eyes in death. How strong is the hold of attachment upon a worldly man! There is none in the family who requires his attention, yet for the sake of a grandson he cannot go to Kâshi (Benares) to practise devotion. "What will become of my *Haru*," is a sufficient thought to keep him bound to the world. In a trap for catching fish the way out is always open, yet the fish do not leave it. The caterpillar shuts itself up in its own saliva and perishes. In the same way, this incarnation is undoubtedly unreal, evanescent.*

70. J——'s mother grew old. She thought it was high time that she should retire from the world and spend the evening of her life peacefully in Vrindavan. She expressed her intention to Sri Ramakrishna. But the Master knew her circumstances too well to endorse her proposal, and answered as follows:—

"You are very fond of your son's daughter. The thought of the child will force itself upon you and make

* Gospel (Bengali) by M.

you restless, wherever you go. You may live in Vrindavan if you like, but your mind will always hover about your home. On the other hand, all the good of living in Vrindavan will come of its own accord to you, if you cultivate your sweet affection for your granddaughter, in the thought that she is Sri Radhika Herself. Fondle her just as much as you are wont; feed and dress her to your heart's content; but always think to yourself that in those acts you are offering your worship to the goddess of Vrindavan."

71. As on the troubled surface of a lake the moon is reflected in broken images, so on the unsettled mind of the worldly man engrossed in Maya, the reflection of God is broken and partial.+

72 Seeing the water pass glittering through a network of bamboo chips the small fry enter into it with great pleasure, and having once entered it they are caught therein and cannot get out. So also foolish men enter into the world allured by its false glamour, and as it is easier to enter the net than to get out of it, it is easier to enter the world than to renounce it.

73 A kite was flying skyward with a fish in its beak when a number of crows and kites pursued it, making a tremendous noise and annoying it dreadfully. It tried many ways to escape with its prey, now soaring up, and then coming suddenly down, again darting swiftly in one direction, next plunging round and making for the

* Gospel (Bengali) by M.

opposite, but all to no purpose. Its tormentors would not leave it alone. At last, exhausted and disgusted, it dropped the fish, which was instantly caught up by another kite, to its great relief, for its tormentors now turned their attention to the talons of the second captor and left it alone. Once free, it alighted on a tree and perched to rest An Avadhuta who was watching the birds, seeing the kite at last perch itself serenely on a tree, bowed to it and exclaimed, "Oh what peace and happiness attend upon him who shakes off all attractions and burdens and becomes free! What danger otherwise!" *

74. A tame mungoose has its nest high up on the wall of a house. One end of a rope is tied to its neck, while the other end is fastened to a weight The mungoose with the appendage runs and plays in the rooms or the yard of the house, but no sooner is it frightened than it runs and hides itself in its home on the wall. Alas, however, it cannot stay there long, for the weight at the other end of the rope draws it down, and it is forced to leave its home

Even so, a man has his home high up at the feet of the Almighty. Whenever he is frightened by adversity and misfortune, he withdraws to God, his true Home, but in a short time he is drawn down into the world by its irresistible attractions.

75. The heavier scale of a balance goes down while the lighter rises up. Similarly, he who is weighed down by too many cares and anxieties of the world, goes down

* Gospel (Bengali) by M.

into it, while he who has fewer cares rises up towards the feet of the Lord.

76. Q. What is the world like?

A. It is like an Amrhâ fruit, all skin and stone with very little pulp, the eating of which produces colic.

Wealth and Sex: The Conquest of Desire*

77. You cannot live in a sooty room without having your skin blackened to some extent, however cautious you may be. So, if a man, however cautious and clever he may be, lives in the company of a young woman, some carnal thought, however small, is sure to arise in his mind.

78. Vijoy† :— I like so much to come here, but I am not free, as I have undertaken the office of the Samaj

Sri Ramakrishna :— You say you are not free. It is

* In view of the misconstruction not unfrequently put upon his sayings, a word of explanation is necessary in regard to Sri Ramakrishna's favourite expression "*Kâmini Kânchana*" [woman and wealth]. Needless to state, he used it in a very general sense meaning the world with all its ties—all the influences which are at work to prevent the soul soaring Godward; not that he taught his disciples to hate every woman or womankind in general, which can be clearly seen by going through all his teachings under this head, and judging them collectively instead of jumping to a conclusion from a stray saying. Who has ever paid so much honour to and ennobled woman as he did, knowing her to be not only the mother, but the manifestation of the Blissful Mother Divine of the Universe? These teachings were delivered to men struggling with their animal instincts. Had they been women in the same circumstances, he would, doubtless, in advising them, have substituted "man" for "woman"

† The well-known Pandit Vijoy Krishna Goswami. He was at this time a preacher of the Brahmo Samaj. He left this sect later to take up a life of renunciation after orthodox Hindu style.

woman and wealth that enthral people, and deprive them of their independence. Woman multiplies the wants of daily life, consequently the necessity for money arises, freedom of action is gone, and servitude is the only course left.

The priests in charge of Govindji, of Jeypore, used to live, at first, the life of celibacy. But they were so very spiritual and full of fire that they refused to attend the court at the call of the king, who was their master, returning him word, "Let him come here if he has any business with us." After some time the Raja managed to marry them and then they came constantly to see him without being asked at all,—one to bless him, another with sacred flowers from the altar of the divine image, for the king, the third with holy food, and so on. They had to do these things in order to meet the diverse necessities of life: one day, in order to add rooms to their cottages, another, to celebrate *annaprasana* ceremony of their sons, and again, to meet another social need, and so on.

You can see for yourself what you have become by serving under others. Those of your young men who are quite learned in English and cultivated after the Western model, silently put up with the kicks of their masters! Do you know what is in the background of all these humiliations and pangs of thraldom?—It is woman.*

79. Referring to a young disciple the Master said: "A change for the worse has come over his face. A dark shadowy film seems to have spread over it. All this is

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* Gospel (Bengali) by M.

due to office work. There are the accounts and a hundred other matters to attend to." †

80. The Master to a young disciple :—" Like a man of the world you have taken a paid appointment. But you are working for your mother. Otherwise I should have said, 'For shame ! For shame !' " He repeated this a hundred times and again said, "Serve only the Lord." †

81. Money can win for you bread only. Do not consider it as your sole end and aim ! †

82. Women and gold, remember, keep men immersed in worldliness and away from God It is remarkable that no one has anything but praise for his own wife, be she good, bad or indifferent. †

83 The mind steeped in affection for woman and wealth is like the green betel-nut. So long as the nut is green, it remains adherent to its shell, but when it dries, shell and nut become separated, and on being shaken the kernel moves within So when the affection for woman and wealth dries up from within, the soul is perceived as quite different from the body. ‡

84. A man under the influence of high fever and with excessive thirst, is placed between a row of pitchers filled with cold water and a set of open-mouthed bottles full of acid sauces. Is it possible for the restless and thirsty patient in such a case to refrain from drinking the water or tasting the sauces, though thereby his case may be-

† Gospel by M. ‡ Gospel (Bengali) by M.

come worse? Even such is the condition of a man who is under the maddening influence of his ever-active and misleading senses when placed between the attractions of woman's charms on the one side and those of wealth on the other. He is irresistibly drawn towards them, making his case worse than before.†

85. When is the tongue of a balance removed from the pointed needle attached to the top?

When one side of the scale becomes heavier than the other. So the mind is removed from God and becomes unbalanced when the pressure of wealth or sex is placed upon it.†

86. Intense is the attraction of the world. As the mouth of the dyspeptic waters at the sight of tamarind and pickles, for which he has no need since they are poison to him,—in the same manner, the mind of a man though having no real need for them, is attracted by woman and by wealth. So he who wishes to attain to God, should first try to cut off these relations.†

87. Be careful, householders! Put not too much confidence in women! They establish their mastery over you so very insidiously!

88. As the monkey sacrifices his life at the feet of the hunter, so does a man at the feet of a beautiful woman.

89. Nityananda asked of Sri Chaitanya:—

"Why do not all my teachings of Divine Love produce tangible results on the minds of men?"

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† Gospel (Bengali) by M.

Sri Chaitanya replied :—"Because of their association with women most men cannot retain the higher teachings. Remember, Brother Nityananda, there is no salvation for the worldly-minded."†

90. Is it *Máyá* (माया—illusion) or *Meye* (मेये—woman = sex) which has devoured everything?

91. World-bound souls cannot resist the temptation of woman and wealth and direct their minds to God, even though these things bring upon them a thousand humiliations.

92. A ripe mango can be dedicated to the gods and used for all holy purposes, but if it is pecked by a crow it becomes of no use at all,—it cannot be offered to gods or Bráhmanas, nor should it be eaten by oneself. Boys and young men of pure minds should be led early into the path of religion, before worldliness enters deeply into them. It is difficult to lead them Godward if they have once been intoxicated with the wine of woman and the world.†

93. Try to gain absolute mastery over your sexual instinct. If one succeeds in doing this, a physiological change is produced in the body by the development of a hitherto rudimentary nerve known by the name of *Medhá* whose function it is to transmute the lower energies into the higher. The knowledge of the higher self is gained after the development of this *Medhá* nerve.†

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† Gospel (Bengali) by M.

94. Snakes are venomous reptiles. If you go to catch them you are sure to be bitten. But the man who has learnt the art of charming them by magnetised dust, why, what is it for him to catch them? He can play with seven of them twisted round his neck.

95. As water flows under a bridge without stagnating, so money passes through the hands of the free but is never hoarded by them.

96. He is a true man to whom money is a servant. Those who have it and do not know how to use it, do not deserve to be called men.‡

97. There are some who boast of their wealth and power, of their name and fame and high status in society. But all these things are for a few days only. None of them will follow one after death

98. There is nothing to be proud of in money. If you say, you are rich, there are richer and richer men than you, in comparison with whom you are a mere beggar. After dusk when the glowworms make their appearance, they think, "We are giving light to the world." But when the stars rise, their pride is gone. Then the stars begin to think, "We are shedding light on the universe." But after sometime, the moon ascends the sky, and the stars become humiliated and sad. So again the moon begins to be proud thinking that by her light the world is lighted and bathed in beauty. But, lo!

‡ Gospel (Bengali) by M.

the dawn proclaims the advent of the rising sun on the eastern horizon. And where is the moon now?

If they who believe themselves to be rich ponder over these natural facts, they will never, never boast of riches and power.*

99. If you smear the palms of your hands with oil and then break open a jack-fruit, the milky exudation of the fruit will not stick to your hands and trouble you. So if you first fortify yourself with the true knowledge of the Universal Self, and then live in the midst of women and wealth, they will affect you in no way.†

100. How does the attraction of sensual pleasures die away?

In God, who is the embodiment of all happiness and pleasure at once. They who realise Him can find no attraction in the mean and worthless pleasures of the world.

101. Fences must be put about young plants, or cattle will destroy them. But when they have become great trees, elephants by the score can be chained to their trunks without any fear of harming them. So also, if one lives in the midst of sense pleasures after having attained the highest knowledge, nothing in the world can daunt or unbalance one.†

102. As wet wood put on a furnace, loses its moisture gradually, so the moisture of worldliness dries away of itself from the man who has taken refuge in God

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* Gospel (Bengali) by M. † Gospel by M.

and repeats His holy name. He who intends to think of God, after his attachment to things has ceased, will never be able to do so;—for that time will never come.

103. As a flint does not lose its properties, but gives forth sparks of fire whenever taken out and struck, though it be kept under water for a thousand years, so the man favoured with the grace of God does not change internally at all, even if he remain immersed in the world. ‡

104. Children say when they come across a snake, "Mother Manasá (the goddess of snake), please go away, showing your tail and hiding your head!" So also it is wise to hold aloof from such influences as have a tendency to excite sensuality. It is far better not to come in contact with them than to gain experience by a fall.

105. The Master to Dr. Sircar: This, however, is not for the householder, but for the Sannyasin alone. He should seek every now and then some solitary place, where there will be none to disturb him, and meditate on God. Thus will the spirit of devotion come, and he will be able to live unattached. After the birth of a son or two, the husband and wife should live as if they were brother and sister, and should always pray to God that their minds run no more after sense pleasures.†

106. Once a Marwari gentleman came to Sri Ramakrishna and said, "How is it, Sir, that I have renounced everything and yet do not see God?"

‡ Gospel (Bengali) by M. † Gospel by M.

Sri Ramakrishna:— You know the leather-jar used for keeping oil. Well, if you empty all the oil from one of them, there will yet be a little sticking to the bottom and the sides. The smell continues to the last. So in you, there is yet left a little smell of worldliness.

107. One day a Marwari gentleman came to Sri Ramakrishna and asked permission to present him with some thousands of rupees to meet any expenditure that might arise. But Sri Ramakrishna had nothing for the well-meant offer but a stern refusal. He said, 'I can have nothing to do with your money, for if I accepted it my mind would be always with it."

Then it was proposed to invest the money in the name of one of Sri Ramakrishna's relatives for his uses. To which he replied, "No, it would be double-dealing. Moreover, it would always be in my mind that I was keeping my money with so and so."

But the Marwari still persisted in his proposal, quoting one of Sri Ramakrishna's own sayings, "If the mind be like oil, it will float even upon an ocean of woman and of wealth."

He said:—"That is true, but if mustard oil floats on water for a considerable length of time, it becomes putrefied; and so, even if the mind do float over the ocean of woman and wealth, their continuous contact for a long period would surely tend towards vitiation and give out an evil odour."

108. A disciple once asked Sri Ramakrishna how to conquer lust, for though he passed his life in religious contemplation, yet evil thoughts did arise in his mind

from time to time. The Bhagavan replied:—

"There was a man who had a pet dog. He used to caress him, carry him about in his arms, play with him and kiss him. A wise man seeing his folly, urged him not to lavish such indulgence on a dog. It was, after all, an unreasoning brute, and might bite him one of these days. The owner took the advice to heart, and putting the dog off his knee, resolved never again to fondle or caress him. But the animal could not at first understand the changed feelings of the man, and would run to him frequently to be taken up and caressed. Being beaten several times he at last desisted from troubling his master. Such is your condition also. The dog that you have cherished so long in your bosom will not easily leave you, though you may wish to be rid of him However, there is no harm in it. Do not caress him any more, but give him a good beating whenever he approaches you to be fondled, and in course of time you will be freed altogether from his importunities"

109. When paper is moistened with oil, it cannot be written upon. So the soul spoiled by the oil of sense-enjoyment, is unfit for spiritual devotion. But just as the oiled paper when overlaid with chalk can be written upon again, so when the soul is chalked over with *renunciation* it once more becomes fit for spiritual progress

110. When the mind is free from attachment to sense-objects, it goes straight to God and is fixed on Him. Bound souls become free in this way. That soul is bound which takes the path that leads away from God.

111. Those who have any wish to attain to God and

make progress in religious devotion should particularly guard themselves against the snares of lust and wealth. Without doing this none can attain perfection.

112. On being asked how the internal enemies, such as, lust, anger, can be vanquished, the Bhagavan said :—

"So long as these passions are directed towards the world and its objects they are enemies, but when they are directed towards the Deity, they become the best friends of man, for they take him to God. The desire for things worldly must be changed into longing for God; the anger which you feel towards your fellow-creatures must be directed towards God, for not manifesting Himself to you, and so on with all the other passions. The passions need not, and cannot be eradicated, but they can be educated and turned into a different channel."*

113. The woman who has a king for her lover will not accept the wooing of a street-beggar. So the soul that has found favour in the sight of the Lord, does not want the paltry things of this world.

114. He who has once tasted crystalised sugar-candy finds no pleasure in eating treacle. He who has slept in a palace, will find no comfort in lying down in a dirty hovel. So the soul that has tasted the sweetness of Divine Bliss finds no happiness in the ignoble pleasures of the flesh.

115. Q. How does a true devotee behave when hard pressed by temptation?

A. He gets out of it, if need be, like the stone of a ripe mango squeezed by the hand.

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‡ Gospel (Bengali) by M.

116. If once through intense *vairágyam* (renunciation) one attains to God, then the inordinate temptations of lust fall off, and a man finds himself in no danger from his own wife. If there are two magnets at an equal distance from a piece of iron, which will draw it with a stronger force? Certainly the larger. Verily God is the larger magnet, what can the smaller magnet do against it?

117. A disciple: How ought we to look on women?

Ramakrishna: He who is face to face with Reality, who is blessed with the vision of God, does not regard them with any fear. He sees them as they really are, images of the Divine Mother of the universe. So he not only pays to womankind honour and respect, but actually worships them as a son does a mother.†

118. On being questioned as to the reason of his determined celibacy, although he had a wife, the Master once replied with the story of the God Kartikeya.

Kartikeya, leader of the heavenly hosts, once gave a scratch to a cat. Returning home, he saw the mark of a scratch on his mother's face. "How in the world, Mother," he asked, "came that ugly scratch on your cheek?"

"Why child," replied the Divine Durga, "it is your own handiwork, the mark of your nail." "But how can that be?" said the astonished Kartikeya. "I never remember scratching you."

"No," said his Mother, "but think what you did this morning to the cat!" "Why, yes," said Her son. "Still how could that touch you?" "Dear child," said

† Gospel by M.

his Mother, "nothing exists in this world but Myself. I am the whole Creation. Whatever you hurt, I suffer."

Kartikeya was deeply impressed by this, and determined henceforward never to marry. For every woman was his mother to him.

In the same way, I look upon every woman as my Divine Mother.

119 When I see good women of respectable families, I behold in them the Divine Mother in purity, and when again I look on public women of the city, seated in their open verandas, arrayed in the garb of immorality and shamelessness, in them do also I see the Divine Mother sporting, only in a different attire.

120 All women are portions of that Blessed One and should be looked upon as mothers.†

121 Women whether naturally good or not whether chaste or unchaste, should always be regarded as images of the Blissful Divine Mother.

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† Gospel (Bengali) by M.

Egoism and How to Conquer it

122. The consciousness of self is of two kinds one ripe, the other unripe. 'Nothing is mine, whatever I see, feel or hear, — nay even this body itself is not mine. I am always eternal, free, and all knowing',—such conciousness as this originates in the ripe ego; while the unripe ego makes man feel himself for ever related to the transitory things of the world. 'This is my house, this is my child, this is my wife'- consciousness like this is the manifestation of the unripe ego.

123. Egoism is like a cloud, that keeps God hidden from our sight. If by the mercy of the Guru egoism vanishes, God is seen in His full glory. As for instance, you see in the picture that Sri Ramachandra, who is God, is only two or three steps ahead of Lakshman (the Jiva), but Sita (maya) coming in between the two, prevents Lakshman from having a view of Rama. ‡

124. If I hold this cloth before me, you can not see me any more though I am still as near to you as ever. So

‡ Gospel (Bengali) by M.

also, though God is nearer to you than anything else, yet by reason of the screen of egoism you cannot see Him.‡

125. The true nature of Jiva is eternal Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. It is Egoism that has brought about so many *upadhis* (binding adjuncts), till he has quite forgotten his own nature.

126. The nature of the Jiva changes with the addition of each *upadhi*. When a man dresses like a fop, wearing fine black-bordered muslin, the love-songs of Nidhu Babu spring to his lips. A pair of English boots inflates even a languid man with the delight of vanity—he immediately begins to whistle, and if he has to ascend a flight of stairs, he leaps up from one step to another like a Saheb. If a man holds a pen in his hand, he will go on scratching carelessly on any paper he can lay hold of. ‡

127. Money is an *upadhi* of a very strong nature. As soon as a man becomes rich he is thoroughly changed.

A Brahman who was very meek and humble used to come here every now and then. After some time he stopped coming and we knew nothing of what had happened to him. One day we went over to Konnagore in a boat. As we were getting down from the boat we saw the Brahman sitting on the bank of the Ganges, where, in the fashion of big folks, he was enjoying the pure air of the river. On seeing me he accosted me in a patronising tone with the words, "Halloo Thacoor! How are you doing now?" At once I noticed a change in his tone and said to Hriday who was with me, "I tell you that, Hriday; this man must

‡ Gospel (Bengali) by M.

have come by some riches! Can't you see what a great change has come over him?" And Hriday burst into a loud laugh. †

128. The "I" which makes a man worldly, and attached to lust and wealth, is mischievous. The Individual and the Universal are separated owing to this "I" coming between them. If a stick be thrown, a sheet of water will appear to be divided into two. This stick is the "*aham*. Take it away and the water is again a single undivided mass.

129 What is called the "mischievous I"? The "I" which says, "What! Don't they know me? I have so much money! Who is so wealthy as myself? Who dares to surpass me"?

130 The following are among those who cannot gain self-knowledge. Those who boast of learning, those who are proud of knowledge and those who are vain of riches. If one says to these, "In such and such a place there is a very good sannyasin, will you come to see him"? they will invariably make many excuses and say, they cannot go, but in their own minds they are thinking that they are men of high position, why should they go and pay respect to another"? †

131. The nature of *Tamas* is egotism, which is bred of ignorance.

132. Rain-water will never stand still on high ground, but will run down to the lowest level. even so the mercy of

† Gospel by M.

God remains in the hearts of the lowly, but drains off from those of the vain and proud.

133. So long as there is egotism, neither self-knowledge (*jnana*) nor liberation (*mukti*) is possible, and there is no cessation of birth and death.

134 The vanities of others may gradually fall away but the vanity of a saint about his own sainthood dies hard indeed.

135. Rice, pulse, and potatoes when put into cold water in an earthen jar can be touched with the hand, until after heat has been applied to them. The same statement applies to the *Jiva*. This body is the earthen jar; wealth and learning, caste and lineage, power and position, and so on are like the rice, the pulse, and the potatoes. Egotism is the heat. The Jiva is made so hot (haughty) by egotism!

136. The sun can give heat and light to the whole world, but it can do nothing when the clouds shut out its rays. Similarly, so long as egotism is in the heart, God cannot shine upon it.

137. Self-conceit may dwell with the worst paltriness. Look at the crow, how wise he thinks himself! He never falls into a snare. He flies off at the slightest approach of danger and steals food with the greatest dexterity. Yet the poor fellow cannot help eating filth! Such it is to be overwise or to have the wisdom of the pettifogger.

138. Vanity is like a heap of ashes on which water, as soon as it falls, is dried up. Prayers and contemplations produce no effect upon the heart puffed up with vanity.

139. Those who seek for name and fame are under a delusion. They forget that everything is ordained by the Great Disposer of all things, that all is due to the Lord and to nobody else. The wise man says always, 'It is Thou, O Lord, it is Thou', but the ignorant and the deluded say 'It is I', 'It is I'. †

140. Twice God smiles,--once, when two brothers go to law about the partition of their land, and once again when the doctor assures that he will save the patient's life.

141. How quickly a little learning makes men vain! I was talking to such and such a one about God. But he did not care to hear, saying "All this I know!" I said, "Does one who has been to Delhi go about boasting of it? Does a gentleman remind us that he is a gentleman?"

142. The dyspeptic knows only too well that some things are bad for him, yet such is the force of association that seeing them is enough to make his mouth water. So, even if one tries hard to suppress the idea of I-ness and mine-ness, yet, in the field of action the unripe Ego shows itself.

143. If one ponders over this word 'I', trying hard to track it down, one sees that it is only a word which denotes

† Gospel (Bengali) by M.

egotism. But it is extremely difficult to shake this off. Then one says "You wicked 'I', if you will not go by any means, remain as the servant of God"! This is called ripened egotism.

144. A Brahman was laying out a garden, and looked after it day and night. One day a cow straying in the garden browsed off a mango sapling which was one of the most valuable trees. The Brahman seeing the cow destroy his favourite plant. cudgelled her so hard that she died of the injuries. The news soon spread like wild fire that the Brahman killed the sacred animal.

Now the Brahman when taxed with the sin denied it, saying,—'No, I have not killed the cow; it is my hand that has done it, and as Indra is the presiding Deity of the hand, so if any one has incurred the guilt of killing the cow, it is Indra and not I'.

Indra in his heaven heard this, assumed the shape of an old Brahman, came to the owner of the garden, and said 'Sir, whose garden is this?'

Brahman—Mine.

Indra—It is a beautiful garden. You have a skilful gardener, how neatly and artistically he has planted the trees!

Brahman—Well, sir, that is also my work. The trees are planted under my personal supervision and direction.

Indra—Indeed! O you are very clever. But who has laid out this path? It is very nicely planned and neatly executed.

Brahman—All that has been done by me.

Then Indra with joined hands said, 'If all these things are yours, and you take credit for all the works done in this

garden, it is hard lines for poor Indra to be held responsible for the killing of the cow.'

145. A rich man puts his Sircar (a superintending clerk) in charge of his garden. When visitors look in, the Sircar is all attention to them. He takes them through the different parts of the garden and the house attached to it, saying, 'These, gentlemen, are our mango trees. These other are our *lichi*, *golap-jam*, etc. Here, you see, is our drawing-room. Over there are our oil-paintings and other pictures, so splendid, etc., etc.'

Now suppose the Sircar is caught by his master fishing against his order in the garden lake. Do you know how he is dealt with? Why, he is ordered peremptorily to leave the garden. And it was, bear in mind, the very same man who was so warmly talking of '*our* this' and '*our* that.'

The 'mine' or 'our' of the Sircar comes of *ajnan* (ignorance of the truth) †

146. Know thyself, and thou shalt know the non-self, the Lord of all. What is my ego? Is it my hand, or my foot, flesh or blood, muscle or tendons? Ponder deeply and thou shalt know that there is no such thing as 'I'.

An analysis of the 'ego' convinces that the ultimate substance is God alone. When egoism drops away, Divinity manifests itself.

147. The calf cries '*Hamma*' or '*Aham*', "I".

Now look at the troubles that come upon it through this its *Ahamkar* or egotism, saying 'I', 'I'. In the first

† Gospel Bengali by M.

place, when it grows up it is yoked to the plough. It works from dawn to eve alike in sun and rain. It may be killed by the butcher. Its flesh is eaten. Its skin is tanned into hide and made into shoes. Drums are also made with it, which are mercilessly beaten sometimes with the hand and at others with the drumstick. It is only when out of its entrails are made strings for the bows used for carding cotton that the troubles of the poor creature are over. And that is because it no longer says '*Hamma*' (I) '*Hamma*' (I) but '*Tuhum*' '*Tuhum*' (It is Thou, It is Thou).

148. Thus *Mukti* can be found only by him who has forgotten self. One scarcely says 'Tuhum, It is Thou' until one is cut to the very quick. Even when we have lost all, Thou-ness may or may not come to us to take the place of I-ness. †

149. Think always to yourself in this wise: "These family concerns are not mine, they are God's and I am His servant. I am here to obey His wishes." When this idea becomes firm, there remains nothing which a man may call his own.

150. 'When shall I be free?' When that 'I' has vanished. *I and mine* is ignorance: *Thou and Thine* is knowledge. The saint would say 'Thou, O Lord, art the Doer (*Karta*)'.

151. So long as you say, 'I know', or 'I do not know', you look upon yourself as a person.

My Divine Mother says: 'It is only when I have effaced

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† Gospel (Bengali) by M.

all Aham (I-ness) in you that the Undifferentiated (My impersonal aspect) may be realised in Samadhi'.

Till then there is the 'I' in me and before me.

152. What is the mark of a man who has become perfect (*Siddha*)?

He becomes as soft as a *Siddha* (here is a pun on the word *Siddha* which has the two meanings of *boiled* and *perfect*) potato. The hardness of egotism disappears.

153. When the struggle is at last over, and *Samadhi* attained, then indeed the ego vanishes with all its train. But it is difficult to attain *Samadhi*! This ego of ours is so persistent! For this reason alone, one has to be born again and again.

154. When the soul (*Jiva*) says instinctively 'Not I, O Lord, but Thou! Thou art the Master, I am Thy servant'; it has reached the end of sorrow. This is Mukti, freedom itself.

155. Q. Sir, why are we so bound? Why cannot we see God?

A. Because the idea of self is the *Maya* of the soul. It is our egotism that shuts out the light. When this 'I' is gone all difficulty will have vanished. If by God's grace the thought that 'I am not the doer' is firmly established in the heart, a man becomes free even in this life. For him there is no more fear. †

† Gospel (Bengali by) M.

156. How few are they who can attain *Samadhi* and rid themselves of this *Aham*, this self. It seldom goes. Reason as you will, discriminate without ceasing, still this *Aham* comes back to you again and again. To-day cut down the Pepul tree, but tomorrow you will see it has sprouted forth again.

157. If after all you cannot destroy this 'I', then let it remain as 'I the servant'. The self that knows itself as the servant and lover of God will do little mischief. Sugar-candy is not amongst the sweets that give us indigestion.

158. By acquiring the conviction that all is done by the will of God. one becomes only a tool in His hand. Then one is free, even in this life. 'Thou doest Thy work, men say I do it.'

159. If you feel proud, do it in the thought that you are the servant of God, the son of God. Great men have the nature of children. They are always children before God, so they have no egoism. All their strength is of God—belonging to and coming from Him, nothing of themselves.

160. The vegetables in the cooking pot move and leap till the children think they are living beings. But the grown-ups explain that they are not moving of themselves; if the fire be taken away they will soon cease to stir. So it is ignorance that thinks 'I am the doer'. All our strength is the strength of God. All is silent if the fire be removed. Marionette dances well, while the wires are pulled; but when the master's hand is gone, it falls inert.‡

‡ Gospel (Bengali) by M.

161. So long as one has not seen the divine vision, so long as one has not touched the philosopher's stone, so long must there remain the illusion, 'I am the doer,' 'Here I have done evil, and there good'. It is this differentiation which creates for us the world-*Maya*. By doing right one may take refuge in *vidya-maya* (the *maya* having the peponderance of *Sattva*), and by *vidya-maya* one may reach Him. He alone crosses the ocean of this maya who realises God face to face. He is truly free, even in this life, who knows that God does all and he does nothing.†

162. There are three different paths to reach the ideal, the path of *I*, the path of *Thou*, and the path of *Thou and I*. According to the first, all that is, has been, or ever will be, is I myself. In other words, I am, I was, and I shall be, to all eternity. According to the second, Thou art, O Lord, and all is Thine. And according to the third, Thou art the Lord, and I am Thy servant or Thy son. In the perfection of any one of these three, God is realised.

163. Said one: am I to understand that you advise us to forsake 'the rebel I', but say that there is no harm in keeping 'the servant I'?

Said Sri Ramakrishna: Oh yes, the 'servant I'!

In this conviction that I am his servant, or I am his worshipper, there is no harm. On the other hand it brings us to God.

164. When the idea has been perfectly assimilated the man will retain only the appearance of having the feelings

† Gospel (Bengali) by M.

and impulses of his own. Even if the egotism of the servant or the worshipper should remain, he who has attained to God can hurt none. The whole sting of personality has vanished. The sword has become gold, by the touch of the philosopher's stone. It keeps its form but can not wound again.

165. Even when we are blinded by the fulfilment of every worldly desire there may arise in us the question, Who am I who enjoy all this? This may be the moment in which begins a revelation of the secret.

166. Be as free from vanity as the dead leaf carried on by the high wind.

167. Sankaracharya had a certain disciple, who served him long without receiving any teaching. One day, hearing footsteps behind him he asked 'who is there?' and was answered by this disciple, 'It is I'. Then said the master, "If this 'I' is so dear to thee, either stretch it to the infinite or renounce it altogether."

The Vidya Ego or the Higher Self

168. When the head of a goat is severed from its body, the trunk moves about for some time, still showing the signs of life. Similarly, though the Ahamkara (egoism) is beheaded in the perfect man, yet sufficient of its vitality is left to make such a man carry on the functions of physical life; but it is not sufficient to bind him again to the world.

169. The petals of the lotus, or the rinds of the nut drop off in time, but they leave scars behind. So when true knowledge comes egoism goes off, but its traces remain. These, however, are not at all potent for mischief.

170. Some great souls who have reached the seventh or the highest plane of Samadhi and have thus become merged in God-consciousness are pleased to come down from that spiritual height for the good of mankind. They keep the ego of knowledge (the *Aham* of *Vidya*) or in other words the higher Self. But this ego is a mere appearance. It is like a line drawn across a sheet of water.

171. Hanumana was blessed with the Vision of God both Sákâra and Nirâkâra (with form and without form).

But he retained the ego of a servant of God. Such was also the case with Narada, Sankara, Sananda, and Sanat-kumar.

(Here the question was asked if Narada and others were Bhaktas only and not Jnanis too. The Bhagavan said:)

Narada and others had attained the highest knowledge (Brahmajnana). But still they went on like murmuring waters of the rivulet talking and singing. This shows that they too kept this ego of knowledge—a slight trace of individuality to mark their separate existence from the Deity, for the purpose of teaching others the saving truths of Religion.

172. It is a case of going back and coming forth. You go backwards to the Supreme Being and your personality becomes one with His personality. This is Samadhi. You then retrace your steps. You get back your ego and come to the point whence you started, only to see that the world and your ego are derived from the same Supreme Being and that God, Man and Nature are faces of the One Reality so that if you hold fast to one of them you realise them all.

173. Talking with a disciple, the master asked, 'Have I, do you think, any egotism (*abhiman*) left?' 'Yes', said the disciple, 'I think you have a little. You have kept it because it was necessary for the preservation of the body, for the play of your love for God, for the enjoyment of the company of the worshippers, and for the sake of helping others by instruction. This egotism too is the result of prayer. I believe that your whole soul can be described only in the word *Samadhi*. Therefore do I feel that your egotism has been kept by prayer'. 'Yes', said the master, 'but it

is not I that have kept it, but my Divine Mother. It lies with my Divine Mother to grant the prayer'. †

174. He is truly wise who has seen the Lord. Such a man becomes like a little child. His individuality is merely in appearance, not in reality. The self of the child is nothing like the self of the grown-up man.

175. He who has seen the Lord, is a changed being.

176. When the sword has been turned into gold, by the touch of the philosopher's stone, it continues no doubt to have the appearance of a sword, but it can do no harm to any. Our ego (Ahamkar), similarly, if made pure by realising God can do no harm to any one. †

177. The self (*aham*) of a child is like a face reflected in a mirror. The face in the mirror looks exactly like the real face, but it is merely a semblance.

178. After the attainment of Samadhi, some retain the ego, as the ego of the servant, or the ego of the worshipper. Sankaracharya kept the ego of Vidya (knowledge) for the teaching of others.

179. The ego of the servant, the ego of the worshipper, the ego of Vidya, these are all names of the ripe ego.

180. The "servant I", the 'I' of a devotee, or the 'I' of a child, each of these is like a line drawn with a stick on the surface of the water. It does not last long.

† Gospel (Bengali) by M.

181. As a piece of rope when burnt retains its form but is no good for binding, so is the ego which is burnt by the fire of Supreme Knowledge.

182. When a leaf of the cocoa-nut tree drops off, it leaves a mark on the trunk, by which we can see that there was once a leaf there. So, he who has attained God, keeps only the marks, the withered scars, of anger and passion. His nature is just like that of a child. Having none of the consistency of *Satva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, it is as quick to attach itself to a thing as to leave it. You can persuade a little boy to hand over to you clothing worth sever al shillings in exchange for a toy worth a single farthing though at first he will tell you, "No, I won't give it to you, my father bought it for me." To the child every one is equal, he has no discrimination of high and low, and consequently no distinction of caste. If his mother says, "So and so is your brother," he will take rice out of the same plate with him, even if the other is a carpenter's son. Nor has he any hatred, or any idea of cleanliness and pollution (*shuchi* and *ashuchi*). ‡

183. A man dreams that some one is coming to cut him to pieces. Frightened he awakes with a groaning noise, and sees that his door is closed from within and no one is in the room. Even then, his heart continues to beat thickly for some minutes. So does our *Abhiman* or egotism, even in departing, leave behind it some momentum.‡

‡ Gospel by M.

184. Q. Do you have, sir, the slightest idea of ego when you are merged in Samadhi?

A. Yes, usually a litte ego remains. It is like the particle of gold-leaf which, if rubbed on a lump of gold, does not wear itself off completely. All outward consciousness disappears, but the Lord keeps a little ego to let me enjoy Him.

Some times, however, He drives away even that little. This is the formless Samadhi. No one can say what that state is, it is the absolute transformation of one's own self into His. The image made of salt plunged into the ocean to measure its depth. But no sooner did it touch the water than it was dissolved. Then who could come up to give information as to how deep the ocean was?

185. As a vessel that has held garlic paste retains the odour, even after it is washed, so also lingers egoism, even in the nature that has been purified by knowledge.

186. The words 'My' and 'Mine' spring from ignorance. We say, for instance, 'the Brahmo Samaj was founded by such and such person'. How few of us say, it came into existence by the will of God? But to think nothing whatever, not home, nor wife, nor child, is mine, for all is His—this is Jnana.

187. Live in the world as the maid servant in her master's house. She speaks of the place as hers knowing full well that it is his. She nurses and tends his children like a mother, not forgetting that at any moment she may be bidden to leave them. Even so should you be amongst the things of the world.

188. Who is this that is teaching? What have I read? What do I know? Oh mother, I am the instrument (yantra), Thou art the mover (yantri); I am the room, Thou art the tenant; I am the sheath, Thou art the sword; I am the chariot, Thou art the driver; I do as thou makest me do; I speak as Thou willest me to speak; I behave as Thou, within me, behavest; not I, not I, but Thou.

189. The perfect realisation that all is done by God, makes one *Jivanmukta*, free even in this life. Thou doest Thine own work, O Mother! Men only *think* they do it.

190. Q. Can the ripe ego form a sect and be a leader?

A. If one has the idea that one is a leader and that one has formed a sect, then, of course, it is the unripe ego. But if, by realising God, a man receives a commission, and preaches Him for the good of others there is no harm in that! Sukadeva had such a commission to reveal the Bhagavat to Parikshit. †

191. As sugar-candy has not the unwholesomeness of other sweets, so, in the ego that thinks of itself as servant or worshipper, there is not the unwholesomeness of the unripe ego. On the other hand it leads us to God. It is, in fact, Bhakti-Yoga.

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† Gospel (Bengali) by M.

Against Fanaticism

192. Dala (sedge) does not grow in large and pure water tanks, but in small stagnant and miasmatic pools. Similarly, Dala (clique) does not form in a party whose adherents are guided by pure, broad, and unselfish motives, but it takes firm foot in a party whose members are given to selfishness, insincerity and bigotry. ('Dala' in Bengali, means both sedge and clique).

193. When the grace of the Almighty descends, every one will undrestand one's mistakes; knowing this you should not dispute.

194. Be not like the frog in the well. The frog in the well knows nothing bigger and grander than its well. So are all bigots: they donot see anything better than their own creeds.

195. A truly religious man should think that other religions also are paths leading to truth. We should always maintain an attitude of respect towards other religions.

196. Remain always strong and steadfast in thy own

faith, but eschew all bigotry and intolerance.

197. There was a man who worshipped Shiva, but hated all other deities. One day Shiva appeared to him and said, 'I shall never be pleased with you, so long as you hate the other Gods'. But the man was inexorable. After a few days Shiva again appeared to him. This time he appeared as Hari-Hara, that is, one side of his body was Shiva, and the other Vishnu. At this the man was half pleased and half displeased. He laid his offerings on the side representing Shiva, but nothing to that of Vishnu. When he offered the burning incense to his beloved God (Shiva), he was audacious enough to press the nostrils of Vishnu lest he should have the fragrance. Seeing his behaviour, Shiva was sorely displeased and at once vanished from his sight. But the man was as undaunted as ever. However, the children of the village began to tease him by uttering the name of Vishnu in his hearing. Vexed with this, the man hung two bells on his ears, which he used to ring as soon as the boys cried out the name of Vishnu, in order to prevent the sound entering his ears. And thus he was known by the name of Bell-eared, or Ghantâ-Karna. He is still so much hated for his bigotry that every year at a certain time children in Bengal break his effigy with a cudgel.

Disputation

198. At a distance from the market, we hear only a loud buzzing noise, but entering the market, we hear this no longer, and become aware of the bargains that are being carried on. Similarly, so long as man is far away from God, he is in the midst of the confusion of sophistry, vain argument and discussion; but once he approaches the Almighty, all arguments and discussions cease, and he clearly understands the mysteries of God.

199. So long as a man calls aloud, "Allah Ho! Allah Ho! O God!" be sure that he has not found God. He who finds Him becomes still.

200. So long as the bee has not tasted the honey, it hovers round the lotus humming, but when it reaches the flower, it drinks nector noiselessly. So long as a man disputes about doctrines and dogmas, he has not tasted the nector of true faith. Once he tastes that, he becomes silent.

201. One wishing to take pure water from a shallaw pond, should not disturb it, but gently take it from the surface. If it is disturbed the sediment will rise and make the whole water muddy. So, if you desire to be pure, do not waste your energies in useless scriptural discussions

and arguments, but slowly go on with your devotional practices. Failing this, your little brain will become confused.

203. Dispute not. As you rest firmly on your own faith and opinion, so allow others also equal liberty to stand by theirs. You will never succeed, by mere argument, in convincing another of his error. When the grace of God descends, each one understands his own mistakes.

203. Water poured into an empty vessel makes a bubbling noise, but when the vessel is full, no sound is heard. The man who has not found God is full of vain disputation about the existence and attitude of Godhead. But he who has seen Him, enjoys silently the bliss Divine.

204. Dost thou carry, O preacher, the badge of authority? As the humblest servant of the king, authorised by him, is heard with awe and respect, and can quell a riot by showing his badge; so must thou first, O preacher, obtain thy commission and inspiration from God Himself. So long as thou hast not this badge of Divine inspiration thou mayest talk thy very life away, but it will be all in vain.

205. Throw an unbaked cake of flour into hot melted butter, or *ghee*, and it will make a sort of noise. But the longer it is fried, the less becomes this noise; and when it is fully fried, the bubbling ceases altogether. So long as a man has little knowledge, he goes about talking and preaching, but when the perfection of knowledge is obtained he ceases to make a vain display.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

How to Resist Evil

206. A person living in society specially as a householder, should *make a show* of the spirit of resisting evil for purposes of self-defence, but at the same time trying to avoid paying back evil for evil.

207. In a field where cow-boys kept watch over their cattle, there was a terrible venomous serpent. A holy man was coming that way one day, and the cow-boys warned him of the serpent. "My children," said the holy man, "I am not afraid. I know Mantras to protect me from harm of all kinds." And he continued his way and the snake attacked him with upraised hood. By the incantation of some charm from him, the snake fell helpless at his feet. "Why dost thou," said the holy man, "go about doing evil to others. Let me give thee a holy name (of God) to repeat always, and thou shalt learn to love God, and thy desire to do evil to others will leave thee". So saying he gave him the holy name and went away, promising to see him later.

After this, the cow-boys noticed that the snake would not bite. They pelted him with stones, but he looked meek

and inoffensive. One day the boys held him by the tail, and whirling him round and round, dashed him several times against the ground. The snake vomited blood and was stunned. The boys thinking he was dead, left the place. At night the snake revived, and with much difficulty dragged himself into his hole. His body was broken, and he was reduced to a skeleton, as it was many days before he could come out for food, and that only by night, for fear of further injury. Since he had ceased now to do harm to any of God's creatures, he tried to live as well as he could upon leaves and things of that kind.

The holy man came back and looked about, seeking for the snake, but in vain. At last the boys said that he had died long ago. The holy man knew that his Mantram possessed such spiritual power, that death was out of the question before the problem of life had been solved. At his repeated call, the snake came out and bowed before his Guru. Then the following conversation followed:—

Holy man: How art thou?—

Snake: Master, I am quite well and happy, God willing.

Holy man: How is it that thou art brought down to a mere skeleton?—

Snake: Lord, by thy bidding I have given up doing harm to any living creature. It is just possible that living upon leaves and such things I have got thinner.

Holy man: Well, such food alone could not have brought thee to such a pass. Something else must have had to do with it. Just think it over a little.

Snake: Ah, now I see it all. The boys detecting the change that had come over me, dealt with me one day rather severely and left me all but dead.

Holy man: What a pity, my dear, that thou shouldst

not know how to save thyself from being thus handled by thine enemies! I forbade thee only to bite any creature of God. Why didst thou not hiss and raise thy hood at those who wanted to kill thee, so as to keep them at arm's length?

So raise the hood and hiss at evil-doers but bite them not. Keep them off by showing that thou canst deal an effective blow, if necessary,—that thou hast the *power* of resisting evil. Only one must take care not to pour out one's venom into the blood of one's enemy. Resist not evil by doing evil in return, but make a show of resistance with a view to self-defence. That is one of the *Dharmas* of the householder. †

208. Dost thou know how peasants buy their bullocks for the plough? Oh, they are very expert in these matters, and know very well how to choose the good bullocks from the bad. They know whether the beasts have got any mettle or not. They touch the tail and the effect is miraculous: those that have no mettle in them will offer no resistance, but lie down on the ground, as if they were going to sleep. Those that have mettle, on the other hand, will jump about as if protesting against the liberty taken with them. The peasants will choose the latter.

One must have the true mettle of a man within, if one wishes to be successful in life. But there are many who have no grit in them—who are like popped rice put in milk,—soft and cringing, no strength within, no capacity for sustained effort, no power of will. They are the failures in life. †

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† Gospel by M.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

Maya

209. As fishes playing in a pond covered over with reeds and scum can not be seen from outside, so God plays invisible in the heart of a man, being screened by Maya from human view.

210. Two are the occasions when the Lord smiles. First, when brothers readjust the claims while partitioning the family property, saying, 'This is mine and that is thine'; and secondly, when the patient is on the point of death, and the physician says, 'I will cure him'.

211. Ornaments cannot be made of pure gold, some alloy must be mixed with it. A man totally devoid of Maya will not live more than twenty-one days. So long as the man has body, he must have some Maya, however little it may be, to enable him to carry on the functions of the body.

212. As soon as Maya is recognised, she flies away A priest was once going to the village of a disciple. He had no servant with him. Seeing a cobbler on the way he

addressed him, saying, 'Halo! good man, will you accompany me as a servant? You will dine well and be well cared for; come along.' The cobbler replied, 'Reverend sir, I am of the lowest caste, how can I come as your servant?'—The priest said, 'Never mind. See that you make no friends and speak to no one while you are with me!' The cobbler agreed, and accompanied the Brahman to his disciple's house. In the evening, while the Brahman was performing his evening worship, another Brahman came and addressing the priest's servant, said, 'Fellow, go and bring my shoes!' The servant, true to the behest of his master, made no response. The Brahman repeated his order again and again, but the cobbler moved not an inch. At last, becoming annoyed, the Brahman said angrily, 'Sirrah! How darest thou disobey a Brahman's command What is thy caste? Art thou a cobbler?' The cobbler, hearing this, began to tremble with fear, and looking piteously at his master, said, 'O venerable sir, I am found out. I dare not stay here any longer, let me flee'. So saying he took to his heels.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

Bondage and Freedom

213. The mind is everything. If the mind loses its liberty, you lose yours. If the mind is free, you are free too. The mind may be dipped in any colour, like a white cloth fresh from the wash. Study English, and you must mix English words in your talk in spite of yourself. The pundit who studies Sanskrit must quote Slokas. If the mind be kept in bad company, it will colour one's thought and conversation. Placed in the midst of devotees, it shall meditate upon God and God alone. It changes its nature according to the things amongst which it lives and acts ‡

214. The mind is everything. The attraction for the wife is of one kind, and the affection for the child is of a quite different nature. On one side is one's wife, on another side is the child; one caresses both, but moved by quite different impulses. ‡

215. The bondage is of the mind; freedom is also of the mind. If thou shouldst say,—"I am a free soul, I

‡ Gospel by M.

am the son of God; who can bind me?"—free thou shalt be. If one is bitten by a snake and can say with all the force of will and faith, "There is *no* venom, there is *no* venom," he will surely get rid of the venom. ‡

216. Why talk of sin and hell-fire all the days of your life? Chant the name of God, do say but once, "I have, O Lord, done things that I ought not to have done, and I have left undone things that I ought to have done. O Lord, forgive me!" Saying this, have faith in Him, and you shall be purged of all sins. ‡

217. Call with Bhakti upon the hallowed name of the Lord, and the mountain of your sins shall go out of sight,—as much as a mountain of cotton will burn up and vanish if it but catches one spark of fire. ‡

‡ Gospel by M.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

Of Caste-Customs *

218. A fruit that has ripened and fallen from the tree tastes very sweet. But that which has been plucked and ripened artificially is not so sweet, and soon shrivels up. In like manner, from him who has attained perfection, the rules of caste fall away of themselves, but so long as this exalted knowledge is not reached, he ought to observe their distinctions. To throw them off out of self-will is merely an act of Egotism. †

219. While a storm is blowing, we cannot distinguish between a bo-tree and a banyan. So when the storm of supreme knowledge blows, there can be no distinction of caste. †

220. When a wound is perfectly healed the slough falls

* With regard to some of the sayings here given, it is necessary to explain to the western reader the importance of food, according to Hindus. It is believed that nothing has such an influence on the mind as the material and quality of nourishment, and also that nothing is so inevitably transmitted as the mental moral and emotional influence of those persons who cook and handle it.—Ed.

† Gospel (Bengali by) M.

off of itself; but if the slough be taken off earlier, it bleeds. Similarly, when the perfection of knowledge is reached by a man, the distinctions of caste fall off from him, but it is wrong for the ignorant to ignore such distinctions, as it gives rise to various undesirable consequences.

221. Q. Ought one to wear the Brahmanical thread?

A. When realisation of self is obtained, all fetters drop off of themselves. Then is there no distinction between Brahman and Sudra, between high caste and low. Thus the sacred thread— a sign of caste —falls off of itself. But so long as a man is conscious of distinction and difference he should not throw it away.

222. All born of Brahman parents are equally called by the name of Brahmins. But only some of these become versed in the Vedas. Some act as priests, others earn their living as cooks And still others lie drunk on the thresholds of houses of ill fame.

223. The spiritually-minded belong to a caste of their own beyond all social convention. †

224. He cannot give thought to such trifling questions as food or drink, whose mind yearns after God.

225. A man who eats nothing but *habishyanna* * and feels no thirst for God, is like him who eats the forbidden

* Habishyanna. The food of the religious. It consists of rice cooked in a little *ghee*, or clarified butter, with one's own hands.

† Gospel (Bengali) by M.

God, though eating nothing but beef and ham, lives really upon *habishyanna*. †

226. Any thirst is orthodox that does not make the mind unsteady.

227. Sri Ramakrishna was once asked by a student,—"As the same Lord dwells in every being equally, why should we not eat food out of every man's hands?"

To which the Blessed One replied—"Only a Brahman could put such a question. Suppose you make a flame, but cover it up immediately even with well-dried wood, what will become of the fire? "It will be extinguished", said the student "being choked by fuel".

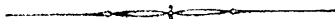
"But" said the Blessed One, "suppose a forest fire is blazing, and you throw into it a bundle of green banana shrubs, what will become of them?"

"They will be reduced to ashes in a moment".

"And so" said Sri Ramakrishna, "if the fire of spirituality in you be very weak, you run the risk of its being extinguished by eating indiscriminately from all hands. But if it be strong, no food will affect you. If persons of evil life dwell near a temple, and eat only the leavings of the offerings, will they thereby attain to freedom?"

"Of course not!" said the enquirer, "are they not going the other way?

"And so" said the master, "your taking food from every hand may not mean that you have already attained to *Brahma-jnana* or really see the Lord in everything".

flesh of cow and hog. But he who longs intently after

Caste and Higher Knowledge

228. Those who utter the name of God are holy. Krishna Kishore was a holy man of Ariadaha.* Once he had been to Brindavan on pilgrimage. There, one day in the course of his walk he felt thirsty and seeing a person standing near a well, he asked him to draw a little water for him. The man said that he was of a very low caste and so not a fit person to draw the water for a Brahman Krishna Kishore said, "Wilt thou pronounce the name of God and thus make thyself pure?" The man did so and drew up some water for him; and he, an orthodox Brahman, drank of the water! How great was the power of his faith! ‡

229. Once Krishna Kishore asked me saying, "Why hast thou cast off the sacred thread?" When this change came over me †, everything was blown away, as if by the great cyclone of *Ashwin*†† The old landmarks were swept away. There was no outward consciousness; who was to

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‡ Gospel by M. * In the neighbourhood of Dakshineswar where the master lived. † Through God-vision and spiritual realisation.

†‡ Cyclone of 1864

take care of either the holy thread, or even of the piece of cloth that I used to wear?

Lost in intense God-consciousness, I could not know that I was nude the greater part of the day. When therefore Krishna Kishore took me to task for having parted with the sacred thread, I only observed, "Thou wilt see it all clearly if thou art once seized with madness for the Lord!" ‡

230. Talkest thou of social reforms? Well, thou mayest do so after realising God. Remember, the Rishis of old gave up the world in order to attain God. This is the one thing needful. All other things shall be added unto thee, if indeed thou carest to have them. First see God, and then talk of lectures and social reforms. ‡

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‡ Gospel by M.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

Guru

231. If thou art in right earnest to be good and pure, God will send thee the *Sat Guru*, the right teacher. Earnestness is the one thing necessary.

232. As when going to a strange country, one must abide by the directions of one who knows the road, while taking the advice of many would lead to confusion, so in trying to reach God one should follow implicitly the advice of a single *Guru* who knows the way to God.

233. Whoever can call on the Almighty with sincerity and intense earnestness, needs no *Guru*. But such earnestness is rare, hence the necessity of a *Guru* or guide. The *Guru* should be only one, but *Upagurus*, secondary *Gurus*, may be many. He from whom anything whatsoever is learnt is an *Upaguru*. The great Avadhuta had twenty-four such *Upagurus*.

234. The Avadhuta saw a bridal procession passing through a meadow, with the beating of drums and the blowing of trumpets, and with great pomp. Hard by he

saw also a sportsman, deeply absorbed in aiming at a bird, paying no heed to the pomp of the procession, and casting not even a stray glance at it. The Avadhuta, saluting the hunter said, 'Sir, you are my Guru. When I sit in meditation may my mind be concentrated on the object of meditation as yours has been on that bird'.

235. An angler was fishing in a pond. The Avadhuta, approaching him asked, 'Brother, which road leads to such and such a place?' The float at that time indicated that the fish was nibbling at the bait. So the man gave no reply, but was all attention to his fishing-rod. When the fish was caught, he turned round and said, 'What was it you were saying, sir?' The Avadhuta saluted him and said, 'Sir you are my Guru. When I sit in contemplation of the Parmatman, let me follow your example, in attending to nothing else before I finish my devotion.'

236. A heron was slowly walking to catch a fish. Behind, there was a huntsman aiming an arrow at it; but the bird was totally unmindful of this fact. The Avadhuta, saluting the heron, said, 'You are my Guru'. When I sit in meditation let me follow your example, and never turn back to see who is behind me.'

237. A kite with a fish in its beak was followed by a host of crows and other kites, which were making a great noise, pecking at it, and trying to snatch the fish away from it. In whatever direction it went, it was followed by this crowd, increasing in number all the time. Becoming very angry, the kite no sooner dropped the fish, than it was instantly caught by another kite, when at once the crowd of

tormentors left it, and ran after the new owner of the fish. The first kite, left to itself, rested calmly on the branch of a tree. Seeing the quiet and tranquil state of the bird the Avadhuta, saluting it, said, 'You are my Guru, O kite; for you have taught me that so long as man does not throw off the burden of the worldly desires he carries he cannot be undisturbed and at peace with himself.'

238. Many roads lead to Calcutta. A certain man started from his home in a distant village to go to the metropolis. He asked a man, 'What road must I take to reach Calcutta soon?' The man said, 'Follow this.' Proceeding some distance, he met another man and asked him, 'Is this the shortest road to Calcutta?' The man replied, 'O no! you must retrace your steps and take the road to your left.' The man did so, going some distance along that new road he met a third man, who pointed out to him yet another road to Calcutta. Thus the traveller made no progress, but spent the day in changing one road for another.

239. He who thinks his spiritual guide a mere man, cannot make much progress in the spiritual life.

240. The disciple should never carp at his own *Guru*. He must obey implicitly whatever his *Guru* says. Says a Bengali couplet: Though my *Guru* may frequent a grog-shop, yet he is the holy Nityanandarai.

241. The *Guru* is the mediator. He brings man to God

242. Take the pearl and throw the oyster-shell away. Follow the teaching given thee by thy *Guru* and throw out

of consideration his human frailties.

243. Listen not, if any one criticises or censures thy *Guru*. Leave the presence of such an one at once

244. *Gurus* can be had by hundreds of thousands but one good disciple it is rare to find.

244. The human *Guru* whispers the sacred formula into the ear; the Divine *Guru* breathes the spirit into the soul

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

The Real Preacher

245. As many have heard of snow but not seen it, so many religious preachers have read about the attributes of God, but have not realised them in their lives. And as many have seen the snow but not tasted it, so many religious teachers have obtained a glimpse of the Divine Glory, but have not comprehended its real essence. He only who has tasted the snow can say what it is like. Similarly, he alone can describe the attributes of God who has associated with Him in his different aspects, now as a servant, again as a friend, now as a lover, or again as absorbed in Him.

246. When grain is measured out to a purchaser from the granary of a rich merchant, the measurer goes on measuring unceasingly while he is constantly being supplied from behind. The store of the small grocer, on the other hand, is soon exhausted. Similarly, it is God Himself who constantly inspires thought and sentiment in the hearts of His devotees, and that is why these are never in lack of what is new and wise. But the book-learned, like petty grocers, soon find themselves short of thought.

247. If, instead of preaching to others, one worships

God all the time, that is preaching enough. He who strives to make himself free, is the real preacher. Hundreds come from all sides to him who is free, and are taught. When a flower opens, the bees come to it uninvited.

248. The gas-light shines unequally in different places. But the life of the light, namely gas, comes from one common reservoir. So the true religious teachers of all climes and ages are like so many lamps through which is emitted the life of the spirit, flowing constantly from one source, the Lord Almighty.

249. Q. What do you think of the man who is a good orator and preacher, but whose spirituality is undeveloped ?

A. He is like a person who squanders another's property, kept in trust with him. He can easily advise others, for it costs him nothing, since the ideas he expresses are not his own but borrowed.

250. Q. What is your opinion about the methods employed by present-day religious preachers?

A. It is like inviting a hundred people to a dinner where the food is sufficient only for one. It is pretending to be a great religious teacher with a very small stock of spiritual experience.

251. Once on a time a learned Brahmana went up to a wise king and said, "I am well versed, Oh king, in the Holy Scriptures. I have come here to teach thee the holy book of Bhagavata." The king knew well that a man who has truly read the Bhagavata would be more desirous of realising his own Self than of gaining honour and wealth

in a king's court. So he replied, "I see, Oh Brahmana, that you yourself have not mastered the book thoroughly. I promise to make you my tutor, but go first and learn the scripture well." The Brahmana went his way, thinking within himself "How foolish was the king to say, I had not mastered the Bhagavata thoroughly, when I have been reading the book over and over these many years!" However he went carefully over the book once more and appeared again before the king. The king replied to him in the same strain as before. The Brahmana was sorely vexed, but thought there must be some meaning in this behaviour of the king. So he went home, shut himself up in his room, and applied himself more than ever to the study of the book. By and by, hidden meanings began to flash before his intellect, and the vanity of running after the bubbles of riches and honour, kings and courts, wealth and fame, all vanished from his unclouded vision. From that day forward he gave himself up entirely to attaining perfection by worship of God, and never thought of returning to the king. A few years after, the king remembered the Brahmana and went to his house to see what he was about. Seeing him now, all radiant with divine light and love, he fell upon his knees and said, "I see that you have now arrived at the true meaning of the scriptures! I am ready indeed to be your disciple, if only you will condescend to make me one!"

252. When a fire burns, the moths come, one knows not whence, and fall into it and die. The fire does not invite the moth to its fate. Even such is the preaching of the perfect. They do not go about calling others, but hundreds come to them no one knows whence, of their

own accord, seeking to have instruction from them.

253. The ants gather of themselves where the sweet-meat has fallen. Do you try to become sugar-candy, and the ants will come to you of themselves.

254. One ray of light from my Divine Mother, the Goddess of wisdom, has power to reduce all the pride of pandits, all men of vast book-learning, into the lowliness of the verriest worm that crawls upon the earth. †

255. There are three classes of religious teachers who are like three different classes of doctors. There is one type of medical men who, when they are called in, look at the patient, feel his pulse, prescribe the necessary medicine and then ask him to take them. If he declines, to do so, they go away without troubling themselves further about the matter. This is the lowest class of doctors.

In the same way there are some religious teachers who do not care much whether their teachings are valued and acted up to or not.

Doctors of the second type not only ask the patient to take their medicine, but they go further. They expostulate with him in case he shows any reluctance to take it.

In the same way, those religious teachers who leave no stone unturned to make other people walk in the ways of righteousness and truth by means of gentle persuasion can be said to belong to the next higher class.

The third and highest kind of doctors would proceed to

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† Gospel (Bengali) by M.

use force with the patient in case their expostulation failed. Such an adviser would go the length of putting his knee on the chest of the patient and forcing the medicine down his throat.

Similarly there are some religious teachers who would use force if necessary, with their disciples with a view to making them walk in the way of the Lord. These belong to the highest class. ‡

256. A steam boat not only reaches its destination itself but also carries numbers of people with it to the same place. Preceptors or Acharyas like Narada are such 'steam boats.'

257. The jar when it is filled makes no noise, and so the man who has realised God does not talk. But what, you will say, about Narada and others? Yes, Narada Shukadeva, and a few others like these came back several steps after the attainment of *Samadhi*,* and out of mercy and love they taught mankind.

258. There are two classes of men in this world who are perfect,—those who attain the truth and become silent, enjoying it all by themselves without any thought of others; and those who attain the truth but find no pleasure in keeping it to themselves, and cry out in trumpet tones to all, "Come ye, and enjoy the truth with us."

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* The highest stage of contemplation in which the individual self merges into the Divine. ‡Gospel by M.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

The Religious Teacher

259. A well-known speaker (who shall be nameless), was lecturing in a Harisabha (a religious association). In the course of his speech he said, 'The Lord is totally devoid of *rasa*, meaning literally sweet juice. That being so, we must make Him sweet by lending to Him the sweetness of our own nature. By *rasa* he meant love and other divine attributes. When I heard this I was reminded of the boy who said that his mother's brother had many horses, and tried to convince his hearers of the fact by saying that a whole cow-house in his uncle's house was full of them. The intelligent could at once see that cow-houses were not exactly places intended for horses, that the youngster must have told a lie, and that he had no experience or knowledge of horses.

To say that God is devoid of *rasa*, that is, love, joy, and other attributes, was an absurdity which proved that the speaker was totally ignorant of what he was saying. It showed that he had never realised the Supreme Being, who is the very fountain of Eternal Love, Wisdom, and Joy. ‡

‡ Gospel by M.

260. There was another professional preacher who could rouse strong feelings of devotion in the hearts of his hearers whenever he delivered religious discourses, but who personally was not a man of character. Pained at the kind of life he led, I asked him one day, how it was that he moved so many men's hearts to devotion while he himself lived such an unworthy life. The man bowed and said, "Yes, Sir, the broom, though a contemptible thing, cleans the dust and dirt off the floor and the street!" Of course I could not answer him.

261. One day as I was going through Panchavati* I heard the fearful croaking of some frog. I guessed that one must have been caught by a snake. When after a long time I was returning that way I heard the same noise again. Peeping through the bushes I saw a water snake with a frog in its mouth. It could neither swallow it, nor let it go, and there was no end to the agony of the frog. Then I thought, "Well, if it had been the victim of a venomous snake, it would have been silenced for ever after three croaks at the most. Now the snake's suffering is about equal to the frog's So if an unenlightened man takes upon himself in his fool-hardiness the responsibility of saving another, there is no end to the misery of both. Neither does the ego of the disciple go, nor are his worldly ties cut asunder. If the disciple comes under the influence of an unworthy teacher he can never attain liberation. But under a

* A cluster of five trees planted together: held sacred by the Hindus. Under such a cluster, in the garden of Dakshineshwar, Sri Ramakrishna practised and attained realisation.

competent teacher the egoism of the soul perishes in three croaks! †

262. What power has man to free others from the ties of worldliness? He of Whom is this enchanted *máyá*,—this *máyá* that offers to man in all ages an enigma,—He alone can deliver men from it. There is no other path but the mercy of the *Sachchidananda Guru*. Those who have not attained to God, who are not favoured with His commands, who are not strengthened with the divine strength, what power have they to untie from His creatures the bonds of the world? †

263. Many come to me, and some, I have observed, are anxious to listen to my words. But there are others who seem restless in my presence. They say to their friends in whispers, "Let us go! Let us go! Won't you come? Well, if you mean to stay, we had better go to the boat and wait there for you!"

Therefore I say that time is an important factor in all these matters.

Spiritual awakening is very much a question of time. The teacher is a mere help. ‡

264. A man went to a holy man to get some medicine for his sick child, carrying the little patient in his arms. The holy man told him to come next day. The next day, when the man went, the *Sadhu* said, "Give no sweets to the child, and he will be cured." The man said, "Sir, you could have told me that, yesterday

† Gospel (Bengali by) M. ‡ Gospel by M.

evening!" "Yes," the *Sadhu* replied, "I could. But yesterday I had a lump of sugar lying before me, and thy child seeing it would have thought, this *Sadhu* is a hypocrite. He advises me not to take sugar, but he eats it himself."

265. It is needful to have no egotistical feeling, such as the conceit of the preacher, "I am lecturing, hear me, all of you!" Egotism exists in ignorance, not in knowledge. He attains the Truth who is void of conceit. The rain water stands in lowly spots, but runs off from high places.

266. It is a very risky task, this preaching! Sometimes it brings great harm to the preacher. As soon as he sees men doing him honour, he puffs himself up and says, "Hear! Oh ye men, what I declare!" This sort of idea is ruinous. His further progress ends here. A little honour, that is all his reward! At most men will say, "How well, how fluently, so-and-so spoke, he must be very learned!" Don't let the idea enter your mind that *you* are speaking. I say to my Mother, "Mother, I am the tool, Thou art the hand; I do what Thou makest me do; I say what Thou biddest me to say."

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

Advice to the Religious Teacher

267. Does thou, O Preacher, carry the badge of authority? As the humblest subject wearing the badge of the King is heard with respect and awe, and can quell a riot by showing his badge, so must thou first, O Preacher, obtain order and inspiration from God Himself. So long as thou hast not this, thou mayest preach all thy life, but it will all be mere waste of breath. †

268. If you go on preaching without a commission from God, it will all be powerless and none will listen. One must first attain God by devotion or otherwise, and then, if one receives His word one may teach and preach, anywhere and everywhere. For this only one gets power and strength; and then only can one rightly perform the responsible duties of the preacher. ‡

269. One ray of light from my Divine Mother, who is the Goddess of Wisdom, has power to turn the most learned scholar into the veriest worm that crawls upon the earth. ‡

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† Gospel (Bngali) by M. ‡ Gospel by M.

270. Fear not because such and such a Teacher does not seem to be *learned*—does not seem to be well up in the truths taught by the books. Do not fear because he is not book-learned. No! No! He never falls short of the wisdom of life. He has a never-failing supply of Divine Wisdom, truth directly revealed, which rises far superior to the wisdom taught in books. ‡

271. In order that your teaching should take effect you must take the *time factor* into account unless in each case you allow some time to pass, no teaching can ever bear fruit. Thus those that you teach will not, as a rule, be able to profit at once by what you say. ‡

272. Knowledge (*jnana*) cannot be communicated all at once. Its attainment is a question of *time*. Suppose a fever is of a severe type. The doctor will not under these circumstances, give quinine. He knows that it would do no good. The fever must first leave the patient, a matter that depends upon time, and then alone the quinine will be useful Sometimes the fever will go of itself without your giving quinine or any other medicine. Precisely the same is the case with a man who seeks for knowledge. Religious precepts often prove useless so long as one is immersed in worldliness. Allow him a certain time for the enjoyment of the things of this world. When his attachment to the world has somewhat diminished, then is the time for religious instructions to strike root in him. Till then all such instructions are thrown away upon him. ‡

‡ Gospel by M.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

Bhakti

273. The loadstone rock attracts the ship sailing over it, draws out all its nails, separates its planks, and finally, sinks the vessel in the deep. Even so, when the human soul is attracted by the magnet of Universal Consciousness, the latter destroys in a moment all its individuality and selfishness, and sinks it in the ocean of God's infinite Love.

274. A scholar asked Sri Ramakrishna, "What are knowledge, knower, and the object known respectively?" The Bhagavan replied, "Good man, I know nothing of these niceties of scholastic learning! I know only my Mother."

275. That man, the hairs of whose body stand on end with ecstasy at the bare mention of Sri Hari's name, he who sheds tears of love on hearing the name of God, has already taken his last birth.

276. A woman is naturally too shy to relate to any save her dearest friends, the talk she daily has with her husband. In the same way, a devotee does not care

to relate to any but true Bhaktas the ecstatic joys he experiences in his communion with God. But sometimes he becomes impatient to talk over his realisations with them.

277. Why does the devotee take such delight in addressing the Deity as Mother? Because the child is freest with its mother, and consequently she is dearer to him, than anybody else.

278. Just as the hemp-smoker finds no pleasure in smoking alone, so the pious man finds no pleasure in singing the praises of the Almighty alone.

279. If a strange animal enter amongst a herd of cows, it will be driven off by the combined attack of the whole herd. But only let another cow enter, and all the cows will make friends with her, with great mutual licking of bodies. Thus when one devotee meets another, both experience great happiness and are loth to separate, but when a scoffer enters the circle they all carefully avoid him.

280. What is the strength of a devotee? He is the child of God, and his tears are his greatest strength.

281. Two men went into a garden. No sooner had they entered, than one began to count the mango trees, how many mangoes each tree bore, and what might be the approximate value of the whole orchard. The other went to the owner, and made his acquaintance and then, quietly going to a tree, began at his host's

desire, to pluck the fruit and eat it. Which, do you think, was the wiser of these two? Eat mangoes! It will satisfy your hunger. What is the good of counting the leaves and making calculations? The vain man of intellect is uselessly busied with finding out the 'why and wherefore' of Creation, while the humble man of wisdom makes acquaintance with the Creator and enjoys supreme bliss even in this world.

282. Once upon a time conceit entered into the heart of the divine sage Narada, and he thought there was no greater devotee than himself. Reading his thought, the Lord Sri Vishnu said, "Narada, go to such and such a place, where there is a great Bhakta of mine, and do you cultivate his acquaintance!" Accordingly, Narada went and found only a farmer, who rose early in the morning, pronounced the name of Hari once and taking his plough went out for the day to till the ground. At night after once more saying the name of Hari he went to bed. 'How can this rustic be called a lover of God?' thought Narada to himself. 'He is busily engaged in worldly duties, and has no signs of a pious man about him.' The sage then came back to the Lord and told what he thought of his new acquaintance. But the Lord said, "Narada, take this cup full of oil, go round the city and bring it back to me. But take care that not a drop of the oil falls to the ground." Narada did as he was told, and on his return, the Lord asked, "Well, Narada, how often did you remember Me in your walk?" "Not once, my Lord!" replied Narada. "How could I, when I had to watch this cup, brimming over, as it was, with oil?" Then said the Lord, "This one cup of

oil so diverted your attention, then, that even you forgot Me altogether, yet think of that peasant who, burdened with the heavy load of a family, still remembers Me twice a day!"

283. The Knowledge and Love of God are ultimately one. There is no difference between pure Knowledge and pure Love.

284. There are three kinds of love, the selfish, the mutual and the unselfish. Selfish love is the lowest of these. It seeks only its own happiness, no matter if the beloved suffer. In mutual love, the lover seeks not only the happiness of his or her beloved, but has an eye also upon his or her own. Unselfish love is the highest of all. The unselfish lover minds only the welfare of the beloved.

285. A true lover sees God as his nearest and dearest, just as the milkmaids of Vrindavana saw in Sri Krishna, not *Jagannath*, the Lord of the universe, but their own Gopinatha, the Lord of the milkmaid.

286. Can divine love be acquired by reading holy books?

The Hindu almanac contains forecasts of the annual rainfall but however hard we squeeze the book, not a drop of water can be got out of it. So also many good sayings are to be found in holy books, but merely reading them will not make one religious. One must practise the virtues taught in them, in order to acquire the love of God.

287. To M., one of the disciples, the Master said, talking of the Gopis and of how the dark colour of the *Tamâl* tree put Radha in mind of Sri Krishna "How wonderful was this devotion (Anuraga) of theirs! At the sight of the *Tamâl* tree, they were seized with the very madness of love (Premonmada)."

Disciple: This was also the case with Gouranga. Looking at a forest he thought Vrindavana was before him.

Master: "Oh! If one be favoured with but a particle of this ecstatic love! What devotion! Of such devotion they had not only the full complement, the full sixteen annas: they had a good deal more, five sikas and five annas.* ‡

288. It is immaterial whether one believes or not that Radha and Krishna were incarnations of God. One may believe in God's incarnations, like the Hindu or the Christians. Or, like the modern Brahmos, one may not believe in His taking any form at all. But let all have a yearning for this *Anuraga*, this *intense love* of the Lord. This intense love is the one thing needful. ‡

289. If you must be mad, let it not be with the things of the world, but be mad with the love of the Lord.

290. Dive deep into the sea of Divine Love. Fear not. It is the sea of immortality. I once said to Narendra,† "God is like a sea of sweetness. Would you

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* Full measure pressed down and running over (English phrase).
‡ Gospel by M. † Swami Vivekananda.

dive deep into that sea? Suppose, my boy, there were a wide-mouthed vessel containing syrup of sugar, and you were a fly, anxious to drink of it, where would you sit and drink?" Narendra replied that he would like to drink from the edge, for if he happened to fall in, he was sure to be drowned and die. Thereupon I said to him, "You forget, my boy, that if you dive into the Divine Sea, you need fear neither danger nor death. Remember that the Sea of Sachchidananda is the ocean of Immortality, filled with the waters of Everlasting Life. Be not afraid, like some foolish people, that you may 'run to excess' in your love of God." ‡

291. First, obtain *Bhakti* and all other things shall be added unto you. First *Bhakti*, then Work. Work, apart from *Bhakti*, is helpless and cannot stand. ‡

292. For this Kali-Yuga, *Naradiya Bhakti* as it is called, or communion with God, by love, devotion, and self-surrender, as practised by the Rishi Narada is enjoined. There is hardly time for *Karma-Yoga*, that is to say, doing all the duties laid upon man by the scriptures.

Don't you see that the well-known decoction of the ten medicinal roots—*dasha-mula-pâchana*—is not the remedy for the fevers of the present day? The patient runs the risk of being carried off before the medicine has had time to take effect. 'Fever mixture' is therefore the order of the day. ‡

293. *Prema*, the ecstatic love of God, is attainable only by a few. They are men with extraordinary powers

‡ Gospel by M.

and entrusted with a Divine commission. Being heirs of Divine power and glory they form a class by themselves. To this class belong the Avataras, or incarnations of God such as Chaitanya Deva, and their *Bhaktas* of the highest order, who are *amshas* or parts of God Himself.

294. The two characteristics of *Prema* are, first, forgetfulness of the external world, and, second, forgetfulness of one's own body. ‡

295. A jar kept under water is full of water inside and outside. Similarly the soul immersed in God sees the all-pervading Spirit within and without.

296. The darkness of centuries is dispersed so soon as a single light is brought into the room. The accumulated ignorance and misdoings of innumerable births vanish at one glance of the gracious eyes of God.

297. God is in all men, but all men are not in God, that is the reason why they suffer.

298. As a lamp cannot burn without oil, so a man cannot live without God.

299. Q. Where is God? How can we reach Him?

A. There are pearls in the sea; but you must dive again and again, until you find them. So God is in the world, but you will have to persevere, to see Him.

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‡ Gospel by M.

300. The stage of devotion called *Bhava* is like an unripe mango; *Prema* is like the ripe fruit. †

301. *Prema* is like a string in the hands of the *Bhakta*, binding to him that Sachchidananda which is God. The devotee holds the Lord, so to speak, under his control. God comes to him whenever he calls. ‡

302. In Persian books it is written that within the flesh are the bones, within the bones is the marrow, and so on, and within them all is *Prema*. ‡

303. Sri Krishna is called *Tribhanga*, that is, bent in three different directions. It is only a soft thing that is capable of being twisted, so this form of Sri Krishna implies that He must have been softened in some way or other. The softening in this case is accounted for by *Prema*. ‡

304. *Bhakti-Yoga* is communion with God, by means of devotion or *Bhakti* and self-surrender. It is specially adapted to this age, *Kali-Yuga*. It is the *Yugadharma*—the way for the present age. It reduces *Karma*, or work, to a minimum. It teaches the necessity of prayer without ceasing. ‡

305. Pride once entered the heart of Arjuna, the beloved friend of Sri Krishna. Arjuna thought that none equalled him in love and devotion to his Lord and friend. The omniscient Lord, reading the heart of

‡ Gospel by M.

His companion, took him one day for a walk. They had not proceeded far when Arjuna saw a strange Brahmana who was eating dry grass, while a sword dangled at his side. Arjuna at once knew him for a pious follower of Vishnu, whose highest religious duty was not to injure any being. As even grass has life, he would not eat it green but maintained himself by eating it when lifeless and dry. Yet he carried a sword. Arjuna, wondering at the incongruity, turned towards the Lord and said, "How is this? Here is a man who has renounced the idea of injuring any living being, down to meanest blade of grass, yet carries with him the symbol of death and hatred!" The Lord said, "You had better ask the man himself." Arjuna then went up to the Brahmana and said, "Holy sir, you injure no living being; you live on dry grass. Why then do you carry this sword?" The Brahmana said, "It is to punish four persons if I chance to meet them."

"Who are they?" asked Arjuna.

"The first," said the Brahmana, "is the wretch Narada."

"Why?" said Arjuna, "What has he done?"

"He is so impertinent!" said the Brahmana. "Only think of it! He is perpetually awakening the Lord with his songs. He has no consideration whatsoever for His comfort! Day and night, in and out of season, he disturbs the peace of God by his prayers and praises!"

"And who," said Arjuna, "is the second person?"

Said the Brahmana, "The imprudent Draupadi."

"But," asked Arjuna, "What is her fault!"

"Why," said the Brahmana, "Only look at her inconsiderateness! She called my beloved Lord just at

the moment when he was going to dine. He had to give up His dinner and go to the Kamyavana to save the Pandavas from the curse of Durvasa. And her presumption went so far that she even caused my Beloved to eat the impure remnants of her own food!"

"Who is the third?" asked Arjuna.

"It is the heartless Prahlada," the Brahmana replied, "He was so cruel that he did not hesitate for a moment to ask my Lord to enter the boiling cauldron of oil, and be trodden under the heavy feet of elephants, and reveal Himself in the hard adamantine pillar."

"And now tell me," said Arjuna, "Who is the fourth?"

"The fourth," said the Brahmana, "is the wretch Arjuna."

"Why, what fault has he committed?" exclaimed his questioner, in surprise. "Oh" said the Brahmana, "Only look at his audacity! He made my beloved Lord act as his charioteer in the great war of Kurukshetra!"

Arjuna was amazed at the depth of the Brahmana's devotion, and from that very moment his pride vanished and he gave up thinking that he was the Lord's best lover.

306. What is the good of visiting shrines if once you are able to cultivate *Bhakti*? Pilgrimage without *Bhakti* is of no use. With *Bhakti* in your heart, it is not necessary that you must visit the holy places. You are well where you are. *Bhakti* is the one thing needful. ‡

‡ Gospel by M.

307. Be merged in the Lord even as crude medicine is diluted in spirit.

308. Nothing can be impressed on smooth glass, yet when the surface is coated with chemicals, pictures can be impressed upon it, as in photography. Even so on the human heart, coated with the chemicals of *Bhakti*, can be impressed the image of Divinity.

309. Q. How may we recognise the violent form of devotion?

A. A man becomes mad under strong emotion, constantly and fiercely repeating 'Jai Kali!' 'Victory to Kali!' or he dances like a maniac with arms upraised shouting the praise of Hari, 'Hori bol!' In this iron age, violent devotion is more suitable and brings speedier fruition than do milder forms of contemplation. The citadel of God must be taken by storm.

310. As, even in worldliness, there are shades of *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, so also *Bhakti* has its corresponding aspects. There is *Bhakti* that partakes of the humility of *satva*, the ostentation of *rajas*, or the grosser force of *tamas*.

The *satvic* devotee performs his devotions in secret. Perhaps he meditates on his bed during the night inside his mosquito-curtain, and therefore rises late in the morning, a fact explained by his friends as due to want of good sleep. Or his care for his body ends with the first thing that he comes across,—a little rice and vegetables. Of luxury he has none, either in food or

dress, no show in his house of furniture and fittings, and he never seeks to rise in the world by flattery.

The *rajasic* devotee may perhaps wear on his person the distinctive marks of his religion. He may carry his praying beads,—with very likely a few golden ones interspersed. He is particular about outward observances, such as wearing silk at the time of worship, and celebrating religious ceremonies with pomp and splendour, and so on.

The *tamasic* devotee has a fiery faith. He employs force with God, like a rober seizing things by force. "What, I have uttered His name and yet I am to remain sinful! But I am His son! I am duly entitled to the inheritance of His wealth!"—such is his vehement ardour! ‡

311. Devotion to God increases in the same proportion as attachment to sense objects decreases.

312. The more Radha neared Sri Krishna, the stronger did His sweet fragrance become. The nearer one appreaches God, the more is one's heart flooded with blessed feeling and love for Him. The nearer a river comes to the ocean, the more it is characterised by ebb and flow.

313. The Ganges of the even current flows in the heart of the *Jnani*. To him it is all like a dream,—he remains absorbed in his own Self. But in a *Bhakta*, it is not so; he has the ebb and flow in him, he laughs, cries

‡ Gospel by M.

dances and sings, moved by different emotions. The *Bhakta* loves to live in and enjoy God's Presence—in that Ocean of Bliss he loves to cast himself, sometimes swimming, sometimes sinking, and again floating, as a block of ice dances in water, tossing up and down.

314. To B.:— The renunciation of Karma comes of itself when the love of God swells up in the heart. Let them work who are made to do so by God. But the time is ripe for you to do away with it. Renounce everything and say, "Come, O my mind, and let us watch together the Divinity installed in the heart!" †

315. Take refuge in God and forsake shame and fear. "If I were to dance in the name of God, what would people say?"—cast off all such ideas.

316. God can never appear where there is shame, hatred or fear.

317. It is a rare thing—this love of God. *Bhakti* can arise only when there is a whole-hearted devotion to God such as that of a chaste wife for her husband. Pure *Bhakti* is very difficult to obtain. In *Bhakti*, the mind and soul must be absorbed in God. Then comes *Bhâva*, the higher form of *Bhakti*. In *Bhâva* a man becomes speechless, his breath is stilled, the *Kumbhaka*—that part of Yoga in which the indrawn breath remains suspended—sets in of itself, as, when one shoots at an aim, one becomes speechless and the breath is stopped.

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† Gospel (Bengali) by M.

318. The fish may be never so far away, yet it comes as soon as, a good bait is thrown in the water, so also will Hari rise in the heart which has the bait of devotion in it.

319. Prema, the love of God, is very difficult of attainment. Sri Chaitanya had it. In the love of God, one forgets all outward objects, the universe, even one's own body, usually so dear to one.

320. It may be that one does not know the right path and yet has *Bhakti* for God, the intense desire to know Him. Such gain Him through sheer force of *Bhakti*. There was a great devotee who started to see Jagannath, but not knowing the path to Puri, instead of going towards, went away from it. With an anxious heart however, he asked everyone he met about the road. Now, on asking this, they all told him, "This is not the way; take that!" And so the pilgrim reached Puri at last, and had his wishes fulfilled. Thus if one has the will, even if one be ignorant of the path, one is sure to find some one to point it out. One may err at first, but in the end one is set on the right road. †

321. *Bhakti* is the moon, while *Jnana* is the sun I have heard that there are oceans in the extreme nortl and south. It is so cold there that the oceans freeze i parts and masses of ice are formed, in which ships ar caught and held fast.

Even so, may a man be caught half-way in the pat

† Gospel (Bngali) by M.

of *Bhakti*. But it matters nothing, for the ice in which he is held is the solidified water of the ocean of Existence—Knowledge—Bliss. If he were to reason, 'Brahman alone is real, the whole universe is false,' then the ice would thaw in the sun of *Jnana*, and what would remain? Only the formless waters of that ocean of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss.

322. Some, like Narada and Janaka, go on working even afer the attainment of *Jnana* for the teaching of man. This requires a good deal of power. The Rishis devoted themselves solely to self-knowledge, but Acharyas or preceptors like Narada roam about for the good of others. They are, beyond a doubt, heroes!

323 Narada and other Acharyas took to *Bhakti* even after gaining knowledge, for the good of man.

324. Q. Can one realise God if one's passions are not subdued? Will a vicious horse run straight if his eyes are not covered with blinkers?

A. You are speaking of *Jnana-Yoga*, the path of discrimination which also leads to God. The *Jnanis* say that first of all the heart must be purified, hard religious practices must be gone through, then *Jnana* will come.

But again, He can be reached by the path of *Bhakti*. If you can once attain devotion to the lotus-feet of the Lord, if you once find pleasure in singing His glory, then you will not have to struggle long to control the senses, they will of themselves become subdued. Can one who is sorrowing for a son newly lost quarrel with

his neighbours or join a dinner party and enjoy it? If the moth sees fire, will it stay in the dark?—

Q. Even though it gets burnt and dies!

A. That is not so with the *Bhakta*. He does not die, like the insect in the flame. The light which the *Bhakta* runs to, is of the nature of the diamond; it is indeed very bright but it is cool and soothing. Its light does not scorch, but sheds peace and bliss. †

325. Worthless faggots, having no substance, float when left alone, and sink when a bird lights on them; but the great logs of sound timber float downstream just the same, though bearing the weight of a man, a cow or an elephant.

A steam boat crosses a river itself and at the same time takes other with it.

Teachers such as Narada are like the steam-boat and the logs of sound timber. They not only go themselves but they also help others to cross the waters of life. ‡

326. There are some who after eating a mango, will wipe their lips clean lest others should know, but there are some also who, receiving a mango, will call others to share it with them. So there are some who, realising the Divine Bliss, cannot rest without seeking to make others realise it also.

327. 'I must attain perfection in the life; yea, in three days I must find God; nay, with a single utterance of His name, I will draw Him to me!' By such

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† Gospel (Bengali) by M. ‡ Gospel by M.

violent love the Lord is quickly attracted. The luke-worm lover takes ages to reach Him, if indeed he does so at all.

328. There is such a thing as loving God without knowing why. If this comes, there is nothing more to desire. One with such *Bhakti* says, "O Lord, I do not want riches, fame, health, happiness or anything else, grant that I may have pure *Bhakti* for Thy lotus feet!"

329. There is again the kind of *Bhakti* which is called *vaidhi-bhakti* or devotion as enjoined by the Scriptures. Repeating the name of God, fasting on certain occasions, making pilgrimages to certain shrines, worshipping with certain articles, all these constitute *vaidhi-bhakti*. Practice of this for a long time leads to the higher devotion of love, *rága-bhakti*, as it is called. In any case, love is the one thing needful. Worldly ideas must go completely, the mind must be wholly fixed on Him, and then alone can you reach God. Without *rága-bhakti* one cannot attain Him.

There are a few, may be, to whom this *rága-bhakti* comes by nature even from their birth. Such yearn and cry after God, like Prahlád, even in their childhood. They are, perhaps, of the class, born perfect. †

330. Some men become drunk with a small glass of wine. Others require two or three bottles to make them intoxicated. But both have full and equal pleasure in drinking. Some devotees similarly become intoxicated

† Gospel (Bengali) by M.

by meeting the Lord of the universe face to face. Others are filled with ecstasy from only a glimpse of the Divine Glory. But both are equally fortunate, since both are deluged with Divine Bliss.

331. Why does a *Bhakta* forsake everything for the sake of God?

The insect flies from darkness as soon as it sees the light; the ant loses its life in the syrup, but never leaves it. So the *Bhakta* cleaves unto God for ever, and leaves all else.

332. Where does the strength of an aspirant lie?

In his tears. As a mother fulfils any desire of her crying babe, so God vouchsafes to His weeping child whatever it cries for.

333. As the child begs its mother for toys, with tears and entreaties, so he who knows God to be his nearest and dearest, he who like an innocent child, weeps inwardly with earnestness to see Him, is rewarded at last with the vision divine. God can no longer remain hidden from such an earnest and importunate seeker after Him.

334. If you fill an earthen vessel with water and put it away upon a shelf, the water in it dries up within a few days; but its contents would have suffered no diminution so long as it was kept immersed in water. Even so is the case with man's love to the Lord. If you fill and enrich your heart for a time with the love of God and then taking it away from Him, give it to other things,

you will very soon discover that it has lost the priceless jewel and become poor indeed.

335. How sweet is the simplicity of the child! He prefers a doll to all the wealth and riches of the world. So is the faithful devotee. No one else can set aside all wealth and all honour, and take up with God alone.

336. The *Bhakta*, as a rule, does not long for *Brahma-Jnana*, the realisation of the Impersonal, but remains content with realising the divine Person alone, my divine Mother or any of Her infinite forms of glory, such as the divine incarnations, Sri Krishna and Chaitanya Deva, the visible revelations of God. He is anxious that the whole of his ego shall not be effaced in *Samadhi*. He would fain have sufficient individuality left to enjoy the vision divine as a Person. He would fain taste sugar, instead of becoming sugar! ‡

337. Q. Why is there no end to the emotions flowing from the heart of a devotee?

A. When grain is to be measured from the granary of a rich merchant, one man goes on measuring while others keep up the supply. Similarly, the store of a true *Bhakta's* feeling is inexhaustible because God inspires him, whereas the learned man has his thought soon exhausted, like a petty shopkeeper, if he draws his inspiration from books.

‡ Gospel by M.

Preaching and Preachers

338. Indeed, there are three words which prick me to the core: (1) *Guru* (spiritual guide), (2) *Karta* (doer of action) and (3) *Baba* (father). Because God is the only Guru. And my Divine Mother is the sole Doer of actions. I am only an instrument in Her hands. I feel myself always as Her child. ‡

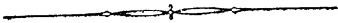
339. Gurus can be had by hundreds of thousands. Everybody is anxious to be a master. How many are there who would care to be disciples? ‡

340. The task of a Guru is very hard indeed. If he has seen the Lord and has been commissioned by Him to teach, as were Narada, Sukadeva and Sankaracharya, it is quite a different matter.

God's Word!--what wonderful weight must it carry! A mountain may be moved by It. ‡

341. For the teaching of divine truths, *Adesha* (direct Commandment of God) is the one thing needful.

‡ Gospel by M.

Else, for a man to teach others—O, it would be ridiculous! Thou shalt thus do greater evil than good! ‡

342. Without *Adesha*, thou wouldst be asserting thyself and think, 'I teach,' 'I am the master and these are *my* disciples.' Self-assertion is the offspring of Ignorance. One enjoys real freedom when one realises that God is the sole Actor in the universe and we are only instruments in His hands. All trouble, all want of peace, cometh of the notion—'I am the Master,' 'I am the free agent (*Kartá*).' ‡

343. The highest teachers are those who say that God is with Form as well as Formless and that He manifests Himself to His devotees as a Being with Forms.

Have you seen a water-passage running over with the water of the river with which it is joined? The passage has sometimes no trace left, being entirely one with the river-water. But very often there may be noticed a slight movement in its water which proves its separateness from the river-water.

Pretty much the same is the case with the teacher whose soul has become one with the Universal Soul, but in whom there is still this Ego of Knowledge kept on—a slight trace of individuality to mark his separate existence from the Deity. ‡

‡ Gospel by M.

Preaching and Highest Knowledge

344. What availeth book-learning or delivery of lectures, if there is no Viveka within—the discrimination of the Real from the Unreal. ‡

345. Once in a certain village, there was a young man nick-named Podo. In that village there was an old dilapidated temple, from which the holy Image of God, once worshipped, had disappeared, and it was now the home of birds and bats. One day at nightfall, the villagers were surprised to hear the sound of bells, gong and conch-shell issuing from the deserted temple. Men, women and children, all flocked to the place, thinking some devotee must be worshipping a new Image of God recently set up there and performing the *Aratrika*.* With folded hands they all stood before the temple listening to the sacred sounds.

One of them more curious than the rest, had the courage to peep in. What was his surprise to see Podo

‡ Gospel by M.

* The evening ceremony consisting of the waving of lights, flowers, fruits, holy water, &c., before the Image.

ringing the bell and blowing the conch-shell! The floor was as dirty as before and there was no image to worship! He then called out saying, "O Podo, thou hast no Image of God in thy temple! And behold thou hast not even taken the trouble of cleansing and purifying the temple! How is it that thou hast raised all this clamour by blowing the conch-shell?"

First, realise God in the Temple of your heart. To that end, cleanse it of all impurities—all attachment to this world caused by the senses. It is then that the time comes for blowing the shell, if need be.

It is a most difficult task—that of teaching others. He who seeth God receiveth His Commandment. He alone who receiveth Commandment is competent to teach others. ‡

346. First set God up in the temple of the heart; first realise Him. Speeches, lectures and the rest,—these may be taken up after you have *seen* God,—not before. People talk glibly of God and Brahman, while all the time they are attached to things of the world. What does all this amount to?—Mere blowing of the conch-shell in the *Aratrika* without any God to worship within the temple. ‡

‡Gospel by M.

Book-learning and the Highest Knowledge

347. In the Hindu almanac, it is mentioned that on a particular day there will be twenty *Adás* (measure of capacity) of rain-water. But you will not be able to squeeze out of the almanac a single drop!

Our so-called Pandits will talk big. They will talk of Brahman, God, the Absolute, of Jnana-Yoga, philosophy, ontology, and the rest. But there are very few that have realised the things they talk about. They are dry and hard, and good for nothing.

The *Parâvidyá* or Highest Learning is that by which God is known. All else, the Shastras, philosophy, logic, grammer, &c., as such, only load and puzzle the mind. They are good only when they lead to the Highest Learning. ‡

348. All that can be learned by going through the whole of the Gita can be as well accomplished by repeating "Gita," "Gita"—Gi-ta-gi-ta-gita, ten times; it virtually comes to be "*tyági*," "*tyági*," which means one who has given up the world for the sake of God. ‡

‡ Gospel by M.

In one word, the Gita says, "Give up,"—give up the world both outwardly and from the mind.

349. Chaitanya Deva in the course of his pilgrimage through the Southern parts of India (Deccan), came across a certain devotee who was in tears all the while that a Pandit was reading from the Gita. Now, this devotee knew not even the letters. He could not follow a single text of the Gita. Upon being asked why he shed tears, he replied, "It is indeed true that I do not know a word of the Gita. But all the while that it was being read I could not help seeing with my inner eye the beautiful form of my Lord Sri Krishna, seated before Arjuna in a chariot on the field of Kurukshetra, and giving out all those sublime thoughts, known as the Gita. This it was which filled my eyes with tears of joy and love

This man who knew not letters had the Highest Learning, for he had a pure love for God and could realise Him.‡

‡ Gospel by M.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

Avatara

350. As a large and powerful steamer moves swiftly over the waters, towing rafts and barges in its wake, so when a Saviour comes, He carries thousands easily across the ocean of Maya.

351. When there is a flood, river, stream and land all alike present one watery surface. But the rainwater flows away through different channels. So when a Saviour becomes incarnate, all are saved through His grace. The perfect men who are called Siddhas only save themselves, by much pain and penance.

352. A great raft of timber floating down a stream, can carry a hundred men on it, and still it does not sink, but a floating reed may sink with the weight of a crow. So when a Saviour becomes incarnate, innumerable are the men who find salvation by taking refuge in Him. The Siddha saves only himself, and that with much toil and trouble.

353. The locomotive engine in reaching the destination itself, draws also and takes with it a long train of loaded waggons. In the same way, act the Saviours.

They carry multitudes of men, burdened with the cares and sorrows of the world, to the feet of the Almighty.

354. When Bhagavan Sri Ramachandra came to this world, only twelve sages recognised Him as an incarnation of God. So when God descends to this world, there are few who recognise His Divine nature.

355. On the tree of Sat-chit-ananda grow innumerable fruits such as Rama, Krishna, Christ and others : one or two of them come down now and then to this world, and they work wonderful changes in society.

356. The Avatara or Saviour is the messenger of God. He is like the viceroy of a mighty monarch. As when there is some disturbance in a far-off province the King sends his viceroy to quell it; so whenever there is prevalence of irreligion in any part of the world, God sends His Avatara for its destruction.

357. The Avatara is always one and the same. plunging into the ocean of life, He rises up in one place and is known as Krishna, diving again and rising elsewhere He is kown as Christ.

358. None knows the immensity of the sacrifice which God makes when He incarnates Himself.

359. Water can be obtained from a great depth with much difficulty, but during the rains, when the whole country is flooded it is everywhere easily obtainable. So God who, generally, is reached only with great pain, through prayer and penance, makes Himself felt any-

where and everywhere when there is an Incarnation who floods the world with spirituality.

360. A perfected soul, *Siddha-purusha*, is like an archælogist who discovers an ancient well covered with the soil and accumulation of ages. The Incarnation, or Avatara, on the other hand, is like a great engineer who sinks a new well in a place where there was none before. Great men can lead to salvation only those who had already the springs of piety and goodness in themselves, but the Saviour saves him also whose heart is as dry as the desert and who is devoid of all love.

361. Think not that Rama and Sita, Krishna and Radha, were mere allegories and not historical personages; or that the Scriptures are true only in their inner or esoteric meaning. Nay, there must have been human beings of flesh and blood who personified the ideals of Rama and Sita, and because they were also divinities, their lives can be interpreted both historically and allegorically.

362. The Avataras are to Brahman what the waves are to the ocean.

363. As the elephant has two sets of teeth, the external tusks and the inner grinders, so the God-men, like Sri Krishna, act and behave to all appearances as common men, while their heart and soul are absorbed in the Highest far beyond the region of Karma.

364. As the dawn heralds the rising sun, so sincerity, unselfishness, purity, and righteousness, precede the advent of the Lord.

365. As a master, before going to visit a servant, sends to his dependent from his own stores the necessary requisites, seats, and food, in order that he may worthily receive him, so before the Lord comes, He sends yearning love, reverence, and faith, into the heart of the devotee whom He is about to honour.

366. The seeds of *Vajravantula* do not fall to the root of the tree. They are carried by the wind to places far away and there take root. Even so the spirit of a prophet manifests itself at a distance, and he is appreciated there.

367. Q. Why should God incarnate Himself in human form.

A. To make manifest to man the perfection of Divinity. Through these manifestations man can talk with God and see His play. In the Incarnation, God fully enjoys, as it were, His own transcendent sweetness.

In the saints, God manifests Himself only in part, like honey in a flower. You suck the flower and get a a little honey. In the Incarnation, it is all 'honey,'—all sweetness and all blessedness. †

368. A Divine Incarnation is hard to comprehend. It is the play of the Infinite on the finite.

369. The Lord takes the human body for the sake of those pure souls who love the Lord.

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‡ Gospel (Bengali) by M.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

Faith

370. The flint-stone may remain under water for myriads of years, without ever losing its internal fire. Strike it with iron whenever you like, and out flies still the glowing spark. Even so firm is the true devotee in his faith. Though he may remain surrounded by all the impurities of the world, he never loses his faith and love. He is entranced on hearing the name of the Almighty.

371. The stone may remain in water for numberless years, and yet the water will never penetrate it. But clay is soon softened into mud by the contact of water. So the strong heart of the faithful does not despair in the midst of trials and persecutions, but the man of weak faith is shaken, even by the most trifling cause.

372. How sweet is the simplicity of the child! He prefers a doll to all the riches of earth. So is the faithful devotee. No one else can throw aside wealth and honour for the sake of God.

373. He who has faith has all, and he who lacks faith lacks all.

374. The faith-healers of India order their patients to repeat with full conviction the words, 'There is no illness here at all.' The patients repeat them, and this mental suggestion helps to drive off the disease. So if you think yourself to be morally weak you will actually become so in no time. Know and believe that you are of immense power and the power will come to you at last.

375. A disciple, having firm faith in the infinite power of his Guru, walked over a river by simply uttering his name. The Guru, seeing this, thought within himself, "What? Is there such a power in my mere name? How very great and powerful, then, I must be!" The next day he himself tried to walk over the river uttering 'I, I, I,' but no sooner had he stepped into the water than he sank and was drowned. Faith can achieve miracles, while vanity or egotism is the death of man.

376. If thou wouldst see God, repeat His name with firm faith, and try to discriminate the Real from the Unreal.

377. A man wanted to cross a river. A sage gave him an amulet and said, 'This will carry you across.' The man, taking it in his hand, began to walk over the water. Before he had gone half the way he was seized with curiosity, and opened the amulet to see what was in it. Therein he found, written on a piece of paper the sacred name of Rama, the Lord. At this the man said depreciatingly, 'can this be the only secret?' No sooner had this scepticism entered his mind than he sank down.

It is faith in the name of the Lord that works wonders, for faith is life and doubt is death.

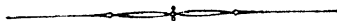
378. A King, guilty of mortal sin, went to the hermitage of a sage to learn what penance he must perform, in order to be purified. The sage was absent, but his son was at home. The son hearing the case of the king said, "Repeat the name of God (Rama) thrice and your sin will be expiated." When the sage came back and heard of the penance prescribed, he remarked indignantly, "Sins committed in myriads of births are purged immediately by uttering the name of the Almighty but once; how weak must be thy faith, my son, since thou hast ordered the holy name to be repeated thrice!"

379. If thou hast faith thou shalt attain to that for which thou longest.

308. Boil your sugar well over a living fire. As long as there is earth or other impurity in it, the sweet infusion will smoke and simmer. But when all impurity is cast out, there will be neither smoke nor sound; the delicious crystalline fluid, in its unmixed worth, whether liquid or solid, will be the delight of men and gods. Such is the character of the man of faith.

381. To kill another, swords and shields are needed, whilst to kill oneself even a pin will do; so to teach others one must study many Scriptures and sciences, whilst to acquire self-illumination, firm faih in a single motto will suffice.

382. Bhagavan Sri Ramachandra had to bridge the ocean before he could cross over to Lanka or Ceylon. But Hanuman, the faithful monkey, with one jump crossed the ocean, through the firmness of his faith in Rama. Here the servant achieved more than the master, simply through faith.

283. Pray to the Divine Mother, begging Her to bless you with the love that knows no impurity and with that adamantine faith which cannot be shaken.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

Mental Concentration

384. As a marksman learns to shoot by first aiming at large objects, and the more he acquires the facility, the greater becomes the ease with which he can shoot at smaller marks on the target; so when the mind has been trained to be fixed on images having form, it becomes easy for it to be fixed on the Formless.

385. As a boy begins to learn writing by drawing big scrawls before he can master a smaller hand, so we must acquire the power of concentration by first fixing the mind on forms, and when we have attained success therein, we can easily fix it upon the Formless.

386. At the beginning, a man should choose lonely places, in which to try to concentrate his mind, otherwise many things may distract him. If we keep milk and water together, they mix, but if the milk be changed into butter by churning, the transformed milk, instead of mixing with the water, will float upon it. So when by constant practice a man has become able to effect mental concentration, wherever he may be, his mind will always rise above his environment and rest in God.

387. "To him who is perfect in meditation salvation is very near," is an old saying. A man may be said to have attained perfection in meditation, when as soon as he sits down to meditate, he becomes surrounded with the Divine atmosphere and his soul communes with God.

388. He who at the time of contemplation is so entirely unconscious of everything outside that he would not know if birds were to nest in his hair, has acquired the perfection of meditative power.

389. The Avadhuta, who was a great Yogi, saw a bridal procession passing with much pomp through a meadow, with beating of drums and blowing of trumpets. Hard by the road through which the procession was passing he saw a hunter so deeply absorbed in aiming at a bird, that he was perfectly inattentive to the procession, casting not even a side glance at it. The Avadhuta, saluting the hunter, said, "Sir, thou art my Guru. When I sit in meditation, may my mind be concentrated upon the object of meditation as thine has been upon that bird!"

390. A heron was slowly walking to catch a fish. Behind, there was a hunter aiming an arrow at it, but the bird was totally unmindful of this fact. The Avadhuta saluting the heron said: "When I sit in meditation, let me follow thy example and never turn back to see who is behind me!"

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEACHINGS

Vairagyam : How to Attain It

391. A Brahman met a Sannyasin and in the course of a long talk on religious topics the Sannyasin said to the Brahman: "Lo, my child, there is no depending on anyone in this world! None whom you call your own is yours." This was too much for the Brahman to believe. How could he think that those for whom he was toiling day and night, that is to say, his own family, were not his friends to be counted upon for help in need? So he answered, "But, Sir, when I am troubled with even a slight headache, my mother is so much concerned that she offers to give up her own life gladly if that may only bring relief to me. That such a mother is not a friend whom I can depend upon, is something I cannot imagine! The Sannyasin replied, "If such were indeed the case, then your family would undoubtedly be your friends. But in truth you are greatly mistaken. Never believe for one moment that your father, mother, wife or son would sacrifice his or her life for your sake. You can test my words if you like. Go home, feign excruciating pain, and groan as much as you can. I shall come and give you some fun."

The Brahman acted accordingly. Physicians were called in, but no one could afford relief. The mother of

the patient, with his wife and others, was crying bitterly when the Sanayasin arrived.

"The disease is of a serious nature," said the guest, "and I do not see any chance of his recovery, unless some one comes forward to give up his lite for the sake of the patient." At this everyone stood aghast. The Sannyasin addressing the old mother, said, "It will be only death in life, if in your old age you lose your son who is the bread-winner for you all. But if you will now give your life in exchange for his, I can save him. If you, being his mother, cannot make this sacrifice for him, who else in this world will care to do it?"

The old woman sobbed through her tears, "Reverend Sir, I am ready to do anything you wish for the sake of my boy. My own life—what is that in comparison to his? But the thought, What will become of my other little ones after my death? makes me a coward. Unfortunate that I am, these little ones are in my way!" His father, when asked, said, "Do you understand, my holy man, how little one can do? Everyone in this world suffers for his own Karma. Such is the universal law."

The Sannyasin then turned towards the wife of the patient, and asked her whether she could sacrifice her own life for that of her husband, now that his parents had declined. She wept bitterly, and said, turning to her parents, "For your sakes, dear father and mother, how can I make this sacrifice? Oh wretched that I am! If widowhood be my lot, then let it be so. I cannot make up my mind to cause the grief of bereavement to my father and mother. Moreover if I died, my husband would certainly marry again and forget me at once." In this way everyone wriggled out of the difficulty. Then

the Sannyasin addressed to the patient and said, "Seeing that no one is really prepared to sacrifice his or her life foi you, do you now understand what I meant by saying that there is no depending upon anyone here?" When the Brahman had seen this he abandoned his so-called home and followed the Sannyasin.

392. To convince a Brahman that there is nothing like unselfish love in the world, a Sannyasin to whom he came for religious instruction, told him to go back to his home and feign death for sometime, lying like a corpse as much as he could himself and taking particular care to stretch his arms and legs out stiffly and wide apart. The Brahman acted on the command. and shortly afteiwards the Sannyasin appeared on the scene and asked the wife how she was going to remove the dead body fiom the room. It could only be done by breaking the door and some part of the wall down, or by cutting off the hands and feet of her dead husband. The wife, weeping bitterly said, "Alas, alas, by the cruel hand of destiny I am made a poor widow for life, having no means of sustenance. Where should I find money to put back the door and repair the wall? I fear I must take the othei couise."

With anger and disgust the Brahman rose and frowned upon his wife, "Ah, you soidid witch, is this the love you feigned to have for your husband, who was, as you used to say, even more to you than your own life and soul? Deceived as I have been, the spell is now broken for ever. Stay you in your beloved cottage!" So saying he rushed away from the place, and spent the rest of his days in prayers and devotion.

393. Q. How can we conquer the love of the body?

A. The human frame is made up of decaying matter. It is a collection of flesh, bone, marrow, blood and other unclean substances, subject to putrefaction. By practising such analysis of the body constantly, our love for it vanishes.

394. Q. How can a man learn Vairagyam?

A. A wife once said to her husband, "My dear, I am very anxious about my brother. For the past few months he has been thinking of becoming a Sannyasin and preparing for it. He is trying gradually to reduce all his wants." The husband replied, "You need not all be anxious about your brother. He will never become a Sannyasin. That is not the way." The wife: "How then does one become a Sannyasin?" The husband: "Would you see? This is the way." So saying he tore his cloth into pieces, took two out of them, tied them about him in the form of a *Kaupina** and telling his wife that she and all other women were henceforth to him as his mother, turned and left his home, never to return.

* A loin-cloth which Sannyasins wear about them.

All Faiths Lead to God

395. As one and the same water is called by different names in different languages, one calling it 'water,' another 'vari,' a third 'aqua,' and a fourth 'pâni;' so the one Sachchidananda, absolute Being-Intelligence-Bliss, is invoked by some as God, by some as Allah, by some as Hari, and by others as Brahman.

396. Two persons were hotly disputing as to the colour of a chameleon. One said, 'The chameleon on that palm-tree is of a beautiful red colour.' The other contradicted him saying, 'you are mistaken, the chameleon is not red, but blue.' Being unable to settle the matter by argument, both went to a man who lived under that tree and had watched the chameleon in all its phases of colour. One of the disputants said, 'Is not the chameleon on that tree of a red colour?' The man replied, 'yes, sir.' The other disputant said, 'What do you say? How is that? Surely it is not red, but blue!' The man humbly replied, 'yes, sir, it is blue.' He knew that the chameleon constantly changed its colour; thus he said 'Yes,' to both these questions. Sachchidananda likewise has various forms. The devotee who has seen

Him in one aspect only, knows that aspect alone. But he alone who has seen Him in manifold aspects can say, 'All these forms are of one God, for God is multiform.'

397. Many are the names of God and infinite the forms through which He may be approached. In whatever name and form you worship Him, through it He will be realised by you.

398. Four blind men went to see an elephant. One who touched its leg said, 'The elephant is like a pillar.' The second who touched the trunk said, 'The elephant is like a thick club.' The third touched the belly, and thought it to be like a big jar. The fourth who felt the ears, concluded that the elephant was like a winnowing fan. They then began to dispute amongst themselves as to the figure of the animal they had touched. A passer-by hearing them quarrel, said, 'What is it this you are disputing about?' Then they stated the question and asked him to arbitrate. He said, 'Not one of you knows the real elephant. As a whole, it is neither like a pillar, nor a jar, nor a winnowing fan, nor a club. But its legs are like pillars, its belly like a big jar, its ears like a winnowing fan, and its trunk like a thick club. The elephant itself is a combination of all these.' In exactly the same manner do men quarrel among themselves about religion, each having seen some different aspect of the Deity.

399. As the same sugar may be made into various figures of birds and beasts, so one sweet Divine Mother is worshipped in various climes and ages under various

names and forms. Different creeds are but different paths to reach Her.

400. As various ornaments having different forms and names, are made out of the same lump of gold, so in different ages and countries, under different names and forms one God is worshipped. However various the fashions of his worship, though some love to call Him Father, and others Mother, yet it is one God who is worshipped under so many names, in all these ways.